

New York

03 December 2015

## Secretary-General's press encounter - full transcript

Good afternoon, Ladies and Gentlemen. Thank you for this opportunity.

As you know, tonight I will fly back to Paris again to take part in the climate change conference.

I was very encouraged by what I saw and I heard during the opening days of COP21 – the Summit meeting. World leaders did precisely what they were meant to do: give strong impetus to the negotiations.

Almost all countries have submitted climate action plans, known as INDCs [Intended Nationally Determined Contributions]. Major economies have made significant commitments to cut emissions. Many developed countries have made new financial commitments to help poor and vulnerable countries adapt to climate impacts.

Philanthropists and entrepreneurs are making exciting new commitments and investments -- including efforts such as the Breakthrough Energy Coalition announced by Bill Gates.

Upon my return to Paris, I will participate in the COP 21 “Action Day”, which will showcase the tremendous number of climate partnerships and initiatives involving cities, and private sector and civil society.

In the global economy, the transition to a low-emissions future is well under way. In the negotiating room, there is still a lot of work to do. Key issues remain unresolved, and there is not much time left.

I continue to press developed countries to recognize their responsibility to take the lead, while urging developing countries to do more in line with their growing capabilities.

The world has gone too long without a universal climate agreement that includes all countries as part of the solution. We cannot delay any longer.

There is no perfect agreement. But our goal is clear: an agreement that truly addresses climate change, and puts the world on track for long-term prosperity, stability and peace. That is what the days ahead in Paris can and must deliver.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The refugee crisis and terrorism are also prominent in our minds at this time.

Much of the crisis stems from the conflict in Syria. The Vienna peace process has created new momentum. We are working to launch an initiative in early January that would involve both intra-Syrian political talks and a nationwide ceasefire.

Closed doors and discrimination are worsening the plight of forcibly displaced people across the world. I am especially concerned about misplaced suspicions about migrants and refugees, and widespread anti-Muslim discrimination and bigotry.

The world must also be united against terrorism. No grievances or cause can justify the atrocious violence we have seen in recent weeks.

The world's response needs to be robust, and always within the rule of law and with respect for human rights. We cannot be ruled by fear.

I will soon present to the Member States of the United Nations a comprehensive Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism.

Finally, Ladies and Gentlemen, I would like to make two personnel announcements.

As you know, my Chef de Cabinet Susana Malcorra has left the United Nations to take on new responsibilities as Foreign Minister of Argentina. I wish her well as we welcome her successor, Edmond Mulet, whom I was pleased to swear in yesterday.

Today, I am pleased to announce Mr. Mulet's successor. I have selected Mr. El-Ghassim Wane of Mauritania as Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations. As a senior official of the African Union, he has been a close partner of the United Nations in addressing a wide range of peace and security challenges. I welcome the experience and expertise he brings to this new role.

As we enter the new year, implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development will be a top priority. I again commend the Member States for this major achievement, and I thank the two co-facilitators -- Ambassador David Donoghue of Ireland and Ambassador Macharia Kamau of Kenya -- for their contributions.

Today, I am pleased to announce that Dr. David Nabarro will serve as my Special Adviser on the 2030 Agenda. He is well known to you all for his work on a number of challenges, including food security and the emergency Ebola response. In his new role, he will galvanize action on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Agenda, deepen integration of climate commitments into the 2030 Agenda, and oversee special initiatives such as Every Woman Every Child.

I look forward to working closely with these distinguished public servants as we work to support Member States in translating their commitments into real improvements in the lives of the people we serve.

Thank you very much.

Q: Secretary-General, thank you so much for the... for your words. President [Barack] Obama in Paris made some strong commitments for the United States, but that was followed by two measures in the U.S. Congress that perhaps are undermining his commitments. Are you worried that, in the future, the United States will not be able to live up to a climate agreement? And if you could tell us, on Syria, a follow-up, the meeting... if you expect a meeting here of the support group on 18 December?

SG: I have seen the report. As you know, as the Secretary-General of the United Nations, I don't interfere or involve in domestic politics of any Member States, particularly United States. [Laughter] But I'm also encouraged that more and more people, particularly in the United States, they realise that climate change is a very important agenda, which we have to address. What is encouraging is that more than two-thirds of American people believe that the Government and all U.S. citizens and parliamentarians should work to address climate change phenomenon.

On the international stage, we work with fully empowered representatives of governments, but we need support from and by the parliaments. We also need support by civil society, people. After all, this climate change is something which we must address as soon as possible. We don't have time to lose.

In my talks with the world leaders, not only in Paris, but all throughout my years as the Secretary-General and most recently in many summit meetings, starting from G20 in Antalya, Turkey and Commonwealth summit meeting in Malta and also ASEAN (Association of South East Asian

Nations) summit meeting in Malaysia, there was wholehearted support by the leaders, that just the sheer number, 150 Heads of State and Government who joined the COP-21 opening session, is unprecedented -- 150 Heads of State and Government in one day at one time in one place. That's amazing. I was so much encouraged. Nobody spoke differently there. Everybody spoke that, this time, we are here to deliver what we have to do to address a climate change agreement.

The leadership of the United States, as the largest economy in the world by any standard, is crucially important. And I really appreciate President Obama's strong leadership. He made a very strong commitment during his statement. It's clear that taking climate action now makes good economies, both for domestic and international economies. And addressing climate change will make our global economy and even their respective, each and every nation's economies much better.

Now, low-carbon economy is inevitable. And it is already happening in many, many countries. And it is inevitable. Therefore, I hope that there should be full support by all the countries. Particularly, I count on United States' leadership in this.

Q: And on Syria, Secretary-General, will the meeting be here on the 18th?

SG: It's my understanding that Member States are very closely coordinating to have a third Vienna process meeting here in New York. I'm looking forward to that.

Q: Secretary-General, the G77 and China just a few moments ago released a statement, if I could just read you one line: "The context of the current negotiations as they reach the final stage is that, with only a few exceptions, developed countries have neither honoured their existing commitments nor even provided a clear roadmap on how they intend to do so in the remaining years before 2020." They're raising issues about developed countries that are not willing to negotiate on finance. The language of the text talks about countries that are willing to do so, so they're raising questions about whether this will be legally binding in terms of the financing from developed countries. What do you, sir, want to see from developed countries in these last few days before an agreement is tabled?

SG: I think there are two aspects on this, two dimensions on this. First of all, climate financing, this is a pledge already made by developed world, OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) countries. It was made in Copenhagen in 2009 that the \$100 billion will be mobilised by 2020. Then I have been urging the developed world leaders that this must be delivered, and there should be a politically credible trajectory of mobilising \$100 billion by 2020. This is one very important promise. And, as is already reported, \$62 billion had been confirmed [to be] mobilised by the end of 2014. Now, we are talking about 2015, and now we have another five years to go. And everybody said that it is doable, and it can be presented in a credible way.

Another one, unresolved issue is differentiation. What you are saying, it's again clear that considering historical background, that developed countries should have historical responsibility to provide the financial and technological support for developing countries, particularly those vulnerable group of countries and small island developing states. Now, what they are now discussing is that, while we agree on this principle CBDR -- Common but Differentiated Responsibilities -- but there are some countries, depending upon the developing countries, there are different levels of development and varying levels of capacities. Therefore, while we expect that this should be led mainly, principally, by developed countries, there should be certain balancing by some developing countries who can really do. A good example is that China has announced \$3 billion for South-South Cooperation. even though this is not within that CBDR, but they are doing, according to their own capacities, a level of development. I think this is something which can be done and agreed harmoniously.

Q: Thank you, Secretary-General. From your meetings with the world leaders, do you have now more hope that the Assad laws in Syria is closer to be solved? And how do you see the new rapprochement in Lebanon to solve the presidential vacuum, as well? Thank you.

SG: As we look back during last five years since the beginning of Syrian crisis, people have realized that tremendous tragedies have happened. Many millions of refugees and at least 13 million people inside Syria, they need urgent humanitarian assistance. And we have been suffering and sacrificing by this spread of terrorism and extremism. The continuing tragedy and brutalities of Syrian crisis have provided a perfect breeding ground for these extremists and terrorists to take root. So, therefore, it has given a lot of different crises in different dimensions.

In that regard, this Vienna process has been very important. And for the first time, the countries who have not been sitting together are now sitting together face to face to discuss this matter. Twenty or 23 countries and international organisations have agreed firmly that we need to address this issue from the root. Now, I expect that with all this hard work and negotiations by the parties concerned, there should be a nationwide ceasefire, preferably as early as January. Then there is again a roadmap for having elections.

In the meantime, I am also encouraged that some countries like Saudi Arabia is trying to convene the Syrian armed groups, all these different, different factors. And Staffan de Mistura is working very hard to have intra-Syrian dialogue. This is a good beginning, and we must have very practical and realistic progress in this so that we can resolve all these issues.

Q: And Lebanon?

SG: Lebanon? Lebanon, again, I have taken... I hope, first of all, they should be able to fill this political vacuum where the president has not been elected -- the presidency has been vacant during the last 18 months, and I have taken note of some political dialogue on this. I sincerely hope there should be as soon as possible some normalization of their political situation, then the first and foremost important thing [is] to further promote reconciliation.

Q: The second part of Sherwin's question about legally binding: Will you be satisfied if only parts of an outcome agreement are legally binding?

SG: This is one thing which Member States have addressed, whether this climate change agreement will have to be a binding one or just an agreement. A lot of ideas are now being discussed. First of all, these Intended Nationally Determined Contributions, INDCs, these are not binding. These are just intended. But there is going to be... if agreed, the five-year cycle review and monitoring to make sure that all these INDC commitments are implemented, and I understand that the basic -- many Member States are discussing many different ways, how to make this agreement. It's a very robust and meaningful and universal one with an implementable framework. This is what the Member States is still discussing, and I'm sure they'll be able to find some reasonably harmonious agreement.

I thank you very much. Thank you.