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# Address to the 66th General Assembly: "We the Peoples"

**Ban Ki-moon**



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Mr. President, Distinguished Heads of State and Government,

Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen,

Late next month, a child will be born ... the 7 billionth citizen of our planet Earth.

Let us assume this child is a girl. Most likely she will be poor. She may or may not grow up to be healthy and strong.

If she is especially lucky, she will be educated and go out into the world, full of hopes and dreams.

Beyond that, we know only one thing with certainty: she will enter a world of vast and unpredictable change ... environmental, economic, geopolitical, technological, demographic.

The world's population has tripled since the United Nations was created. And our numbers keep growing.

So do the pressures on land, energy, food and water.

The global economic crisis continues to shake businesses, governments and families around the world.

Joblessness is rising. Social inequalities grow wider. Too many people live in fear.

Excellencies,

The UN exists to serve those in whose name it was conceived ... "WE THE PEOPLES."

During the past five years as UN Secretary-General, I have travelled the world to meet people where they live, to hear their hopes and fears.

Two weeks ago I visited Kiribati and the Solomon Islands. Villagers told me of their fear of climate change. Rising seas are washing into their homes. One day, they might be swept away entirely.

A young girl named Tamauri mustered her courage to speak. "What will become of us," she asked. "What can the United Nations do for us ... "

Today, I pose her question to all of you ... distinguished Heads of State and Government and leaders of the world.

What can we do ... How can we help our people find greater peace, prosperity and justice in a world of crises ...

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

As I reflect on my time in office during the last five years, I am full of passionate conviction ... unshakable faith in the enduring importance of this noble United Nations.

Today, I would like to share with you my perspective on the way ahead. As I see it, we have five imperatives ... five generational opportunities to shape the world of tomorrow by the decisions we make today.

The first and greatest of these is sustainable development ... the imperative of the 21st century.

Saving our planet, lifting people out of poverty, advancing economic growth ... these are one and the same fight.

We must connect the dots between climate change, water scarcity, energy shortages, global health, food security and women's empowerment. Solutions to one problem must be solutions for all.

Rio+20 must succeed.

We must make progress on climate change.

We cannot burn our way to the future. We cannot pretend the danger does not exist ... or dismiss it because it affects someone else.

Today, I call on you to reach a binding climate change agreement ... an agreement with more ambitious national and global emissions targets.

And we need action on the ground, now ... on cutting emissions and on adaptation.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Energy is key ... to our planet, to our way of life. That is why we have launched a pioneering new initiative, Sustainable Energy for All.

We must invest in people ... particularly in education and women's and children's health. Development is not sustainable unless it is equitable and serves all people.

We must intensify our efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, and more.

Today, I urge you to think even bigger and beyond the 2015 deadline.

Let us develop a new generation of sustainable development goals to pick up where the MDGs leave off. Let us agree on the means to achieve them.

Excellencies,

A second great opportunity: prevention.

This year, the UN peacekeeping budget will total \$8 billion.

Consider the savings if we act before conflicts erupt ... by deploying political mediation missions, for example, rather than troops.

We know how to do this. Our record proves it ... in Guinea, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan.

To prevent violations of human rights, we must work for the rule of law and stand against impunity. We have carved out a new dimension for the Responsibility to Protect. We will continue.

To prevent runaway damage from natural disasters, we must work for better disaster-risk reduction and preparedness.

And let us remember: development is ultimately the best prevention.

Today, I ask your support.

Let us commit the resources required. Let us raise "prevention" from an abstract concept to a core operating principle, across the spectrum of our work.

Ladies and gentlemen,

A third imperative: building a safer and more secure world ... our core responsibility as the United Nations.

This year we were sorely tested. In Côte d'Ivoire, we stood firm for democracy and human rights. Working closely with our regional partners, we made a difference in the lives of millions of people.

In Afghanistan and Iraq, we will carry on our missions with determination and commitment to the people of these proud nations.

In Darfur, we continue to save lives and help keep peace under difficult conditions. Our success demands the cooperation and full support of the international community, the parties on the ground and the Sudanese Government.

In Sudan, the parties to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement must work together to prevent conflict and settle outstanding issues.

In the Middle East, we must break the stalemate. We have long agreed that Palestinians deserve a state. Israel needs security. Both want peace. We pledge our unrelenting efforts to help achieve that peace through a negotiated settlement.

We must be innovative in maximizing the unique force for good that is UN peacekeeping. We are pioneering new approaches. We have strengthened our field support and reconfigured the architecture of peacekeeping operations.

In places like the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Sierra Leone, we are building peace by advancing civil society, promoting the rule of law and creating institutions of honest and effective governance.

Today we are capable of more rapid and effective response than ever before, and we will continue.

We remain the world's first emergency responders ... in Pakistan, Haiti and beyond.

It is essential that we continue to build on our most innovative and effective tool for humanitarian relief ... the Central Emergency Response Fund, or CERF.

Famine in Somalia continues to spread. I appeal to you: help save the children of the Horn of Africa.

As we learned in Fukushima and elsewhere, nuclear accidents do not respect national borders. We need global action. We need strong international safety standards to prevent future disasters.

Let us keep pushing on disarmament and non-proliferation. Let us fulfil the dream ... a world free of nuclear weapons.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The fourth big opportunity: supporting nations in transition.

This year's dramatic events in North Africa and the Middle East inspired us. Let us help make the Arab Spring a true season of hope for all.

In Libya, we are deploying a new UN support mission to assist the Libyan authorities establish a new government and legal order, consistent with the aspirations of the Libyan people.

Syria is a special concern. For six months we have seen escalating violence and repression. The Government has repeatedly pledged to undertake reforms and listen to its people. It has not done so. The moment to act is now. The violence must stop.

Others also look to us.

A country may be emerging from war. It may be moving from autocracy to democracy, from poverty to a new prosperity.

The UN must help that country find the right path.

That may involve support to restore justice or build back public services. It may mean helping to organize elections or write a constitution.

Our challenge today is to cement this progress ... and apply the lessons learned.

Nowhere is this challenge more clear than in our efforts to help South Sudan build a functioning state after decades of conflict.

Fifth and finally: we can dramatically advance our efforts in every sphere by working with ... and working for ... women and young people.

Women hold up more than half the sky and represent much of the world's unrealized potential. They are the educators. They raise the children. They hold families together and increasingly drive economies. They are natural leaders.

We need their full engagement ... in government, business and civil society. And this year, for the first time, we have UN Women ... our own unique and powerful engine for dynamic change.

I am especially pleased to see so many women at this year's General Assembly. I welcome, in particular, the next speaker ... Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff, the first woman in UN history to open our General Debate.

We can be proud of how many women leaders we have at the United Nations. We will continue our policy of promoting women at all levels of the Organization.

And we will focus on the new generation. Young people are more than our future. They are also our present, both in numbers and how they drive political and social change. We must find new ways to create decent jobs and opportunities for them ... around the world.

Excellencies,

These are extraordinary challenges. We cannot respond in ordinary ways.

We need one thing above all else ... solidarity.

That begins with the obvious: without resources, we cannot deliver.

Today, I ask governments that have traditionally borne the lion's share of the costs to not flag in their generosity.

Budgets are tight. Yet we also know that investing through the UN is smart policy. Burden-sharing makes the load lighter. Scaling back is no answer.

To the rising powers among you, whose dynamism increasingly drives the global economy ... with power comes responsibility.

For all, I ask that you give what you can ... expertise, peacekeepers, helicopters. Never underestimate the power of your leadership. Again and again, I have seen how the smallest nations make some of the largest contributions to our work.

Governments cannot do the job alone. To deliver for those in need, we must broaden our base and extend our reach. We must harness the full power of partnership across the Organization.

Our successes against malaria show the way. We see the transformative power of partnership in our Every Woman Every Child initiative, with funding commitments of more than \$40 billion ... four times the annual UN budget.

When we combine the UN's unparalleled convening authority and technical resources with the various strengths of governments, the private sector and civil society, we are a formidable force for good.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Finally, we must adapt to changing times.

At this time of austerity, we must do more with less. We must invest the global taxpayers' money wisely, eliminate waste and avoid duplication by Delivering as One.

Accountability and transparency remain our watchwords. We are accountable to the Member States. Yet we cannot become more efficient without their strong and consistent support.

We need to streamline the budget process and help the UN to deliver at a cost no nation can match on its own.

We must keep pushing to build a more modern and mobile workforce ... a UN that is faster and more flexible, a UN that innovates and draws on the power of social media and new technologies, a UN that helps solve real-world problems in real-time.

Last but hardly least, let us do everything we can to protect our UN staff. We have lost so many lives; the UN has become too soft a target.

Today, we remember with gratitude those who serve with such dedication in so many dangerous places.

Excellencies, Distinguished Heads of State and Government,

Here in this great hall, the shrinking islands in the vast Pacific may seem far away. Yet I hear that young girl's plea as clearly as if she were next to me.

Perhaps that is because, 60 years ago, I was that child.

The United Nations is the answer, as it was then.

Standing here today, I hear many millions of other young boys and girls ... asking our help, looking for hope.

“WE THE PEOPLES.”

Seven billion now look to us ... the world's leaders.

They need solutions. They demand leadership. They want us to act.

To act with compassion, courage and conviction.

To act in concert ... nations united at the United Nations.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen:

Let us carry on this journey together.

Thank you.