

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

**THE SECRETARY-GENERAL**

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**ADDRESS TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
New York, 25 September 2012**

**ALL ENGLISH VERSION**

We gather annually in this great hall to look soberly, and without illusion, at the state of our world.

This year, I am here to sound the alarm about our direction as a human family.

We can all see widespread insecurity and injustice, inequality and intolerance.

I see Governments wasting vast and precious funds on deadly weapons – while reducing investments in people.

The severe and growing impacts of climate change are there before our eyes – yet too many people in power seem willfully blind to the threat.

This is a time of turmoil, transition and transformation – a time when time itself is not on our side.

People want jobs and the prospect of a decent life.

All too often, what they get instead is divisiveness... delay... and denial of their dreams and aspirations.

We need to look no further than this room to see expressions of the thirst for progress. A large number of you are here for the first time – new leaders, installed by new voices, and expected to make decisive breaks with the past.

Your people want to see results in real time, now, not the distant future.

The United Nations rightly faces the same scrutiny -- the same impatience -- the same demands for accountability. People do not look to this organization to be simply a mirror reflecting back a divided world.

People want progress and solutions today. They want ideas, your leadership and concrete hope for the future.

Our duty is to respond to these frustrations and yearnings.

My action agenda highlights five imperatives, as I have set out in January this year: sustainable development, prevention, building a more secure world, helping countries in transition and empowering women and youth.

I take heart from important steps forward on some of these fronts.

Extreme poverty has been cut in half since the year 2000.

Democratic transitions are under way in the Arab world, Myanmar and many other countries.

Africa's economic growth has become the fastest in the world.

Asia and Latin America are making important advances.

Still, we must raise our levels of ambition.

We need more from each and every one of you. And the world needs more from our United Nations.

Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Sustainable development is the key to our hopes for the future. It is my top priority as Secretary-General.

Yet poverty and inequalities are still rampant.

Our use of resources threatens the planet's limits. Ecosystems are reaching the breaking point. The world's best science tells us we must change course before it is too late.

Yesterday, the President of the World Bank and I announced that the Sustainable Energy for All initiative is ready to deliver tens of billions of dollars for energy access and efficiency.

Tomorrow I will launch a new initiative – Education First.

On Thursday we will announce major additional support for the Scaling Up Nutrition Movement.

And over the past two years, the 260 partners in our Every Woman Every Child initiative have disbursed \$10 billion in new money.

We are proving, on the ground, that well constructed partnerships can, and are, delivering results that none of us can deliver alone.

The deadline for the Millennium Development Goals is little more than three years away. We must intensify our efforts to eradicate extreme poverty. The economic crisis can not be an excuse to default on your commitments to the basics that all people need.

Even if we achieve the MDGs, there is still a long way to go.

The Rio+20 conference has pointed the way, including towards a set of sustainable development goals.

These new goals and the post-2015 development agenda will guide our work for years to come.

The MDGs sparked a remarkable global mobilization. These new frameworks must do the same -- speaking to and inspiring people across the world.

Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

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Action on climate change remains a major piece of unfinished business.

Last December, Member States agreed to reach a legally binding agreement by 2015. Now, you must make good on this promise. Time is running out on our ability to limit the rise in global temperature to 2 degrees centigrade.

Changing course will not be easy. But to see this as only a burden misses the bigger picture. Sustainability and the green economy offer compelling opportunities to promote jobs, growth, innovation and long-term stability.

The future we want can be ours – if we act now.

Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Just as there can be no peace without development, there can be no development without peace.

I am profoundly concerned about continued violence in Afghanistan and in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I urge Sudan and South Sudan to resolve all remaining post-secession issues.

Somalia has made courageous advances and Libya has held its first free elections in half a century.

Gains must be nurtured and sustained. And we must keep our focus on preventing conflicts before they erupt -- and on settling disputes through peaceful means.

Myanmar's leaders have shown courage and determination in moving on the path of democracy and reconciliation.

The country faces many challenges, from economic reform to the protection of ethnic minorities. As the Government and citizenry work together to meet these responsibilities, the international community and the United Nations must provide the strongest possible support.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The crisis in the Sahel is not getting sufficient attention and support.

Poverty, fragility, drought and sectarian tensions are threats to stability across the region. Unconstitutional changes of government have taken place all too frequently. Extremism is on the rise. Arms are easy to obtain, while jobs are hard to find.

The international community needs a major concerted effort to address this alarming situation. Tomorrow, I will outline our ideas for an integrated strategy. Governments and organizations in the region, as well as international partners, will work out the details in the coming weeks. I urge you to engage and give your strong assistance.

The situation in the Sahel highlights the need to strengthen early warning for development. Sensors and seismographs across the world help us prepare for natural disasters. We must do more to detect the tremors of distress facing the poorest and most vulnerable.

We must also focus greater attention on food security and nutritional resilience. For millions of people, frequent shocks are the new norm.

Food prices are increasingly volatile, provoking public anxiety, panic buying and civil disturbance.

We need to bolster safety nets. We must ramp up investments in sustainable agriculture – particularly for smallholder farmers. Governments must not impose trade restrictions on grains or other agricultural products. This reduces food supplies and discourages farmers from growing more.

Together, we can avoid the food crises we have seen in recent years and achieve our goal of Zero Hunger.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The situation in Syria grows worse by the day.

The crisis is no longer limited to Syria; it is a regional calamity with global ramifications.

This is a serious and growing threat to international peace and security which requires Security Council action.

I call on the international community – especially the members of the Security Council and countries in the region – to solidly and concretely support the efforts of Joint Special Representative Lakhdar Brahimi.

We must stop the violence and flows of arms to both sides, and set in motion a Syrian-led transition as soon as possible.

Humanitarian needs are escalating, in and beyond Syria.

The international community should not look the other way as violence spirals out of control. Brutal human rights abuses continue to be committed, mainly by the Government, but also by opposition groups.

Such crimes must not go unpunished. There is no statute of limitations for such extreme violence.

It is the duty of our generation to put an end to impunity for international crimes, in Syria and elsewhere.

It is our duty to give tangible meaning to the responsibility to protect.

Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The winds of change in the Arab world and elsewhere will continue to blow.

After decades of harsh occupation and humiliating restrictions in almost every aspect of their lives, the Palestinians must be able to realize their right to a viable state of their own.

Israel must be able to live in peace and security, free from threats and rockets.

The two-state solution is the only sustainable option. Yet the door may be closing, for good. The continued growth of Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory seriously undermines efforts toward peace. We must break this dangerous impasse.

I also reject both the language of delegitimization and threats of potential military action by one state against another.

Any such attacks would be devastating. The shrill war talk of recent weeks has been alarming -- and should remind us of the need for peaceful solutions and full respect for the UN Charter and international law.

Leaders have a responsibility to use their voices to lower tensions instead of raising the temperature and volatility of the moment.

Building a more secure world also means pursuing our goal of a world free of nuclear weapons. As long as such weapons exist, we are all at risk.

I look forward to a successful conference later this year on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction.

Iran must prove the solely peaceful intent of its programme. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea must move toward de-nuclearization of the Korean peninsula.

All relevant Security Council resolutions should be implemented in full and without delay.

Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

We shall have neither peace nor development without respect for human rights and the rule of law.

The empowerment of women. The protection of children. The treaties and declarations that have extended the umbrella of protection. They are our touchstones.

Yesterday's high-level meeting on the rule of law sent a strong message about the importance of international law, justice and institutions within and among nations.

Over the past two weeks a disgraceful act of great insensitivity has led to justifiable offense and unjustifiable violence.

Freedom of speech and assembly are fundamental. But neither of these freedoms is a license to incite or commit violence.

Yet we live in a world where, too often, divisions are exploited for short-term political gain

Too many people are ready to take small flames of difference and turn them into a bonfire.

Too many people are tolerant of intolerance.

The moderate majority should not be a silent majority. It must empower itself, and say to bigots and extremists alike: “you do not speak for us”.

Responsible political and community leaders must step up at this time.

Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

With so much at stake, the United Nations must continue to renew itself. We must deliver as one -- across disciplines, structures and locations.

We are building a global Secretariat to support our global presence. That means shared services, integrated approaches and innovative uses of technology.

Staff mobility is a crucial first step. This initiative is long overdue. We will be making a proposal in the weeks ahead, and we will need your support.

Let us work together for a streamlined budget process built on trust. Micromanagement serves no one -- not Member States wanting quick results, and not we in the Secretariat who share your desire for excellence. As Secretary-General, I need space to manage in a dynamic environment.

Let us also prepare ourselves to harness the full power of partnerships across the range of issue areas.

I will soon offer specific proposals for strengthening our partnership capacity. This will allow us to deliver more and better results, enhance accountability and improve coherence. Your support will be essential if we are to meet the many important mandates you give the United Nations.

A strengthened United Nations is a key enabler for all that we hope to achieve for the world’s people. Let us prove that the UN can reform itself and keep pace.

Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have always put people first, and challenges at the centre.

We have worked together for solutions to the problems that matter to people by day – and that keep them up at night.

You, the world’s leaders, hold in your hands the power of the state... the levers of government...

Your people expect you to listen to their aspirations, and to unleash their energies and ideas.

The world expects you to work with each other for the common good.

Nobody can do everything. But each of us, in our own way, can do something.

Together, if all uphold our responsibilities, we can meet today's tests, seize the opportunities of an era of dramatic change, and give new life to the principles and purposes of our founding Charter.

Thank you.