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Acceptance Speech
by
H.E. Mr. BAN Ki-moon
on Appointment as the 8th Secretary-General of the
United Nations

13 October 2006

New York

Madam President, Mr. Secretary-General, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

I stand before you, deeply touched and inspired by your generous words of congratulations and encouragement. With boundless gratitude for the confidence placed in me by the Member States, and with an unswerving resolve to honor that trust, I humbly accept the appointment as the 8th Secretary-General of this great Organization, our United Nations. I wish to extend my deepest respect and appreciation to all the leaders and peoples of the Member States for their strong support.

Thank you, Madam President, for graciously preparing and guiding the meeting today. I greatly look forward to supporting you and working with you, as you wisely steer the Assembly toward a very successful session.

Madam President,

I follow in a line of remarkable leaders. They had also faced this moment, each at a critical juncture in the Organization's history. Like myself today, they must have pondered what the years ahead would hold at the helm of this dynamic institution. Each made important and lasting contributions to our common enterprise in upholding humanity's deepest values and highest aspirations.

In particular, you, Mr. Secretary-General, have astutely guided our Organization into the 21st century. You have defined an ambitious agenda that has made the UN truly indispensable to peace, prosperity and human dignity around the world. Our debt to your courage and vision is immeasurable. I resolve to build upon your legacy.

Distinguished delegates,

By completing the appointment of the next Secretary-General with such alacrity, you have opened an unprecedented opportunity. Never before has an incoming Secretary-General been given sufficient time to prepare. You have given me more than two months. I will use these weeks to consult widely on how best to proceed with our common agenda of reform and revitalization. I will listen attentively to your concerns, expectations and admonitions.

Distinguished delegates,

I am deeply honored to become the second Asian to lead the Organization, following Mr. U Thant who ably served the world four decades ago. It is quite fitting that you have now turned to Asia again for the next Secretary-General to guide the UN system through its 7th decade. Asia is dynamic and diverse, and Asia aspires to take on greater responsibilities for the world. Having come so far and rising still, the region is living and shaping the full range of achievements and challenges of our current times.

Asia is also a region where modesty is a virtue. But the modesty is about demeanor, not about vision and goals. It does not mean the lack of commitment or leadership. Rather, it is quiet determination in action to get things done without so much fanfare. This may be the key to Asia's success, and to the UN's future. Indeed, our Organization is modest in its means, but not in its values. We should be more modest in our words, but not in our performance. The true measure of success for the UN is not how much we promise, but how much we deliver for those who need us most. Given the enduring purposes and inspiring principles of our Organization, we need not shout its praises or preach its virtues. We simply need to live them every day: step by step, program by program, mandate by mandate.

Madam President,

The surge in demand for UN services attests not only to the UN's abiding relevance but also to its central place in advancing human dignity. The UN is needed now more than ever before. The UN's core mission in the previous century was to keep countries from fighting each other. In the new century, the defining mandate is to strengthen the inter-state system so that humanity may be better served amidst new challenges. From the Balkans to Africa, from Asia to the Middle East, we have witnessed the weakening or absence of effective governance leading to the ravaging of human rights and the abandonment of longstanding humanitarian principles. We need competent and responsible states to meet the needs of "we the peoples" for whom the UN was created. And the world's peoples will not be fully served unless peace, development and human rights, the three pillars of the UN, are advanced together with equal vigor.

The road that we must pave toward a world of peace, prosperity and dignity for all has many pitfalls. As Secretary-General, I will make the most of the authority invested in my office by the Charter and the mandate you give me. I will work diligently to

materialize our responsibility to protect the most vulnerable members of humanity and for the peaceful resolution of threats to international security and regional stability.

Madam President,

In order to meet these growing mandates and expectations, we have engaged in the most sweeping reform effort in the history of the Organization. The very scope of the reform has taxed the attention and energies of both the delegations and the Secretariat. But we must stay the course. We need to muster the human, institutional and intellectual resources, and to organize them properly. We should do our part in meeting the Millennium Development Goals, the expanding peace operations, the threats posed by terrorism, WMD proliferation, HIV/AIDS and other pandemics, environmental degradation, and the imperatives of human rights.

Let us remember that we reform not to please others, but because we value what this Organization stands for. We reform because we believe in its future. To revitalize our common endeavor is to renew our faith not only in the UN's programs and purposes but also in each other. We should demand more of ourselves as well as of our Organization. To cut through the fog of mistrust is going to require more intensive dialogue. We cannot change everything at once. But if we choose wisely, and work together transparently, flexibly and honestly, progress in a few areas will lead to progress in many more. Only the Member States can revitalize this Organization. But I will always be there to assist and facilitate as needed.

Madame la Présidente, Excellences, Mesdames et Messieurs,

En tant que Secrétaire général, je suis déterminé à gérer le Secrétariat d'une manière ouverte et responsable. Je chercherai à établir un consensus articulé autour d'un échange libre d'idées et de critiques.

C'est seulement au moyen d'une grande sincérité et d'une discussion ouverte sur les idées et les propositions que nous serons à même de mieux identifier la façon de servir les peuples du monde entier.

J'essaierai d'agir activement afin d'être à la disposition de tous les intéressés. En particulier, pour rendre l'ONU plus proche de l'humanité, je vais travailler pleinement

pour que la société civile s'engage sur la voie du dialogue. Je ferai en sorte d'obtenir l'aide et la participation des organisations de soutien à des causes humanitaires, du monde des affaires et des autres composantes de la société civile à travers le monde et ce, pour le bien de l'Organisation.

Mon mandat sera marqué par les efforts incessants que je ferai pour établir des passerelles et combler les écarts. Un leadership harmonieux, exemplaire refusant la division, et évitant trop de directives abruptes, m'a toujours servi. Comme Secrétaire général, je tiens donc à rester fidèle à ces principes.

Je serai entièrement responsable pour la gestion du Secrétariat. Les Etats membres établissent les mandats et fournissent les ressources. Si les ressources me paraissent insuffisantes pour relever les défis, je n'hésiterai pas à vous le dire. Mais une fois que nous, au Secrétariat, avons décidé d'assumer la charge de notre mission, nous devons être entièrement responsables pour la mener à bien.

Madam President,

I am eager to join the ranks of the world's premier secretariat. I have deep respect and admiration for the able, dedicated, and courageous men and women who serve this Organization day in and day out, often in the face of danger and personal sacrifice. To them, I pledge my utmost support, dedication and solidarity.

Maintaining their proud heritage, while vigorously holding them to the highest standards of professionalism and integrity will be a prime goal of my tenure. The aim of Secretariat reform is not to penalize but to reward, so that their talent and skill, experience and dedication may be fully mobilized and properly utilized. Rewarding hard work and excellence to boost morale, making everyone accountable for his/her own action or inaction, and pushing for greater gender balance, in particular at senior levels:

These will be my guide, as I rally the Secretariat staff for our very best performance in serving the Organization. As your Secretary-General, I am far from perfect, and I will need the unsparing support, cooperation and trust from all represented here. But I pledge to serve you well, with all of my heart and to the best of my abilities. I will seek excellence with humility. I will lead by example. Promises should be made for

the keeping. This has been my motto in life. I intend to stick to it, as I work with all stakeholders for a UN that delivers on its promises.

Madam President,

My heart is overflowing with gratitude toward my country and people who have sent me here to serve. It has been a long journey from my youth in war-torn and destitute Korea to this rostrum and these awesome responsibilities. I could make the journey because the UN was with my people in our darkest days. It gave us hope and sustenance, security and dignity. It showed us a better way. So I feel at home today, however many miles and years I have traveled.

For the Korean people, the UN flag was and remains a beacon of better days to come. There are countless stories of that faith. One belongs to me. In 1956, when the Cold War was raging around the world, as a young boy of twelve, I was chosen to read out a public message, on behalf of my elementary school, addressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Dag Hammarskjold. We urged him to help the people of a certain faraway European country in their fight for freedom and democracy. I hardly understood the deeper meaning of the message. But I knew that the UN was there for help in times of need.

Fifty years later, the world is a much more complex place, and there are many more actors to turn to. During those years, I have travelled many times around the world. I have been elated by the successes of the UN in making life better for countless people. I have also been pained by scenes of its failures. In too many places could I feel the dismay over inaction of the UN, or action that was too little or came too late. I am determined to dispel the disillusionment.

I earnestly hope that young boys and girls of today will grow up knowing that the UN is working hard to build a better future for them. As Secretary-General, I will embrace their hopes and hear their appeals. I am an optimist, and I am full of hope about the future of our global Organization. Let us work together for a UN that can deliver more and better.

Thank you for your kind attention.

(spoken in French)

Madam President, distinguished delegates,

The conduct of my office as Secretary-General will be open, accessible, and accountable. I will seek to build consensus through a free exchange of ideas and critiques. Only by the candid, open testing of ideas and proposals can we identify better means of serving the peoples of the world. I will be accessible and proactive in reaching out to all stakeholders. In particular, to bring the UN closer to the people, I will widely engage civil society in dialogue. I will actively seek the support and input of advocacy groups, businesses, and other constituents of the global citizenry for the good of the Organization. My tenure will be marked by ceaseless efforts to build bridges and close divides. Leadership of harmony not division, by example not instruction has served me well so far. I intend to stay the course as Secretary-General.

I will be fully accountable for the management of this institution. Member States set the mandates and provide the resources. If the resources are not sufficient for the task at hand, I will not be shy about telling you so. But once we in the Secretariat have taken on a task, we must accept full responsibility for its achievement.