

# **Ban Ki-moon**

Secretary-General of the United Nations

## ***'From Syria to Sustainable Development: The United Nations on the Eve of General Assembly 2013'***

New York, September 13, 2013

### **SECRETARY-GENERAL, AT INTERNATIONAL FORUM, SAYS WOMEN NOW HEAD FIVE OF FIFTEEN UNITED NATIONS PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS**

Following are UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's remarks, as prepared for delivery, to the Women's International Forum, From Syria to Sustainable Development: The United Nations on the Eve of General Assembly 2013, in New York, 13 September:

Irmeli Viinanen, President of the Women's International Forum; Nelly Gicho-Niyonzima, Vice-president; members of the Executive Board; ladies and gentlemen:

There is one more person who I must acknowledge — the Patron of this Forum — my wife!

The Women's International Forum is an important part of the United Nations community, and I very much appreciate the links you forge among its members and also the serious attention you give to various issues on the United Nations agenda. It is a pleasure to join you for this pre-General Assembly get-together. I think you will all agree that this is shaping up as a momentous September.

The crisis in Syria is of course foremost in all our minds. This is the biggest peace, security and humanitarian challenge facing the world today. The disaster has been wide-ranging in its consequences: rising sectarian tensions; regional instability; the largest displacements of people in a generation; grave violations of human rights, including sexual violence. The conflict has created a lost generation of children and young people.

The latest fighting has also raised the spectre of chemical warfare — which, if confirmed by the United Nations investigation mission, would be an atrocious violation of international law. As we await the team's report, I continue to press for a political solution. It is time for the parties to stop fighting and start talking. The Syrian people need peace.

At the same time, the United Nations must do more than fight today's fires. We must also look to a wider time horizon and act now to take on the longer-term challenges. Putting them off will only make them even more difficult and expensive to solve.

That is why I am determined to keep the spotlight on sustainable development challenges — including poverty, climate change, women's health and empowerment, our work towards the Millennium Development Goals and the discussions now under way on the post-2015 development agenda.

Despite scepticism when the Millennium Development Goals were first adopted, the eight-point blueprint generated the most significant anti-poverty push in history.

But there is much unfinished business. Nineteen thousand children under age five still die each day, most from preventable diseases; over a billion people still lack even the most basic sanitation; 57 million children are out of school; and pressures on the planet are rising, including through biodiversity loss and above all climate change.

We must intensify our efforts in three crucial ways. First, we must accelerate progress towards the Millennium Development Goals as the 2015 deadline draws near. That means greater action in the areas that are lagging farthest behind — such as maternal mortality and sanitation. It means doing more for education. We must also advance food and nutrition security through deep changes throughout our food systems. We must deliver on existing commitments.

Second, we must shape a single and coherent universal agenda beyond 2015 with sustainable development at its core and accompanied by one concise set of inspirational goals. As highlighted in my recent report “A Life of Dignity for All”, our challenge is to define an agenda that focuses on tackling the development challenges of today and tomorrow.

Much has changed since the year 2000. New economic Powers have emerged; new technologies are reshaping our lives; new pressures are straining our planet. A new era demands a new vision and a responsive global framework. While we transition to a new broader agenda, we must ensure that poverty eradication remains our highest priority. At the same time, we must scale up efforts towards a new dynamic of sustainable energy and job-rich low-carbon growth.

We have already begun the vital discussion on crafting a post-2015 agenda that is ambitious and universal — relevant to all people and all societies. Whatever final form it takes, whatever set of goals are agreed, success rests fundamentally on ridding the world of discrimination against women and girls, and ensuring the protections and opportunities that are their right.

Most of you have heard me speak before about my efforts to lead by example on women’s empowerment. You know that women occupy the senior ranks of the United Nations more than ever before. This year I want to mention a new milestone in the participation of women in our work for peace and security: for the first time, one third of our peacekeeping operations — 5 of 15 — are headed by women: Hilde Johnson in South Sudan; Karin Landgren in Liberia; Lisa Buttenheim in Cyprus; Aïchatou Mindaoudou in Côte d’Ivoire; and, now, the most recent to take up her duties, Sandra Honoré in Haiti.

Let me also mention that this year I also named the United Nations first woman lead mediator in a peace process: Mary Robinson, my Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region of Africa. We have more distance to travel, but we have never been this far before.

Our third imperative is for Member States to make good on their promise to reach a legally binding agreement on climate change — a threat that looms over all of this work.

Current pledges are not enough to avoid catastrophe. Next year, I will convene a climate summit in New York to enable Governments, as well as leaders from the worlds of finance, industry and civil society, to demonstrate the ambition and leadership necessary to put us on a sustainable climate path.

This month’s General Assembly session can generate important momentum towards the progress and achievements we need. There will be important high-level meetings of the General Assembly on people with disabilities and migration. Business, civil society and the philanthropic community will come together to showcase Millennium Development Goals success. Thousands of private sector leaders will attend the Global Compact Summit to press ahead with our corporate citizenship and sustainability initiative.

We will also focus on a number of peace and security challenges in addition to Syria. We will hold a meeting of the oversight mechanism for the peace agreement that the United Nations brokered earlier this year for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes region.

The Middle East Quartet — consisting of the United Nations, the European Union, Russia and the United States — will meet for the first time in more than a year to support the direct Israeli-Palestinian

negotiations that have recently reconvened. We will discuss how to support the transitions in Yemen and Myanmar, and how to consolidate stability following recent elections in Mali.

Finally, we will also mark the twentieth anniversary of the Vienna Conference on Human Rights, a landmark event that led to the establishment of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

This is a full plate. This is a crucial month for global cooperation. I see challenges but most of all I see many opportunities for common progress. Thank you. Now I would be happy to answer your questions.