

Secretary-General Wishes Peace, Prosperity to Successor, Member States, in General Assembly Tribute Statement

12 December 2016: Following are UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's remarks to the General Assembly plenary meeting to pay tribute to the Secretary-General and the taking of the oath of office by Secretary-General-designate António Guterres, in New York today:

Thank you for your very kind words and for your trust. I am deeply moved by your tributes. Serving as Secretary-General of this great organization, has been a great privilege for me of a lifetime.

As some of you said, I am a child of the United Nations. After the Korean War, United Nations aid fed us. United Nations textbooks taught us. United Nations global solidarity showed us we were not alone. For me, the power of the United Nations was never abstract or academic. It is the story of my life, and many Korean people. It is a story of many millions, and millions of people around the world, many children, young boys and girls. This profound appreciation grew even stronger every day during my service with the United Nations.

For the past 10 years, I have been honoured to serve alongside the many courageous, dedicated and talented women and men of the United Nations. I have seen the power of international cooperation in taking on our most pressing challenges, and I have seen the United Nations open its doors wider than ever to civil society and many partners to help us transform our world.

Together, we have faced years filled with challenge: the worst financial collapse since the Great Depression; eruptions of conflict and uprisings for freedom; record numbers of people fleeing war, persecution and poverty; disruptions brought by disease, disasters and a rapidly warming planet. This turmoil tested us. Despite huge difficulties, we helped save lives and protect tens of millions.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on climate change have opened a pathway to a safer, more just and peaceful world for all of us. The empowerment of women took great strides during these years. Youth took on new levels of leadership. New mindsets took hold. Day by day, brick by brick, we built stronger foundations for peace and progress. Yet, so much suffering and strife endure.

So many women and children face violence and exploitation. So many people face hatred solely because of who they are, and so many problems have proven intractable — none more than the bloodshed in Syria and the upheaval it spawned.

As I contemplate how well we have upheld that responsibility across a decade in office, a kaleidoscope of faces is at the forefront of my mind — memories of my visits to the front lines of human need and the frontiers of human progress.

I have maintained a focus on people's dignity and rights — the pillars of our common humanity. I have sought to stand up for the vulnerable and those left behind today. And I have tried to be sure that we are doing all we can so that future generations can live in peace.

Even as I prepare to leave, my heart will stay as it has since I was a child — right here with the United Nations. And that heart is greatly comforted knowing that I am passing the baton to Secretary-General António Guterres, a man of integrity and principle. I have no doubt that he, with his passion and compassion, will successfully navigate many complex challenges and steer the Organization to new and higher heights.

I would also like to express my most profound appreciation to my home country, the Korean people and the Government. Their wholehearted support for the past 10 years has been a great source of encouragement in working proudly for peace, development and human rights across the world. I also take this opportunity to express my deepest thanks to Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson for his outstanding leadership and compassion for humanity. Thank you, and thank you to many other hardworking staff.

In closing, I wish the new Secretary-General, and all of our Member States, peace, prosperity and every success. It has been an honour to serve our United Nations, and work together with you, and for “We the peoples”. I thank you all for your support and your continued commitment to the noble purposes and principles of the United Nations.

Press release: <http://www.un.org/press/en/2016/sqsm18359.doc.htm>