

# UNITED NATIONS IN FOCUS

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## SECRETARY-GENERAL PLANS FOR PROGRESS ON A BROAD FRONT IN 2011



UN Photo / Eskinder Debebe

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon outlines his priorities for 2011 at an informal meeting of the General Assembly. With Mr. Ban are Deputy Secretary-General Asha-Rose Migiro and Joseph Deiss, President of the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly.

**“Y**ou, the UN Member States, are displaying your confidence in the Organization by calling upon it to do more than ever before,” Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said in his year-opening address to the General Assembly on 14 January. With that, he outlined eight main areas of strategic opportunity for the UN in 2011.

The key to the year ahead, said the Secretary-General, is to “build on progress already made – progress that places a premium on the global legitimacy and pulling power of the United Nations.”

Below, *UN In Focus* profiles the eight strategic areas and identifies key objectives for each in 2011.

### I. INCLUSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

A critical test of international resolve in supporting the most vulnerable and creating a stronger, more inclusive global economy will take place at a 2011 meeting on the 48 nations designated by the UN as least developed (33 are in Africa, 14 in South Asia and Oceania, and one, Haiti, in the western hemi-

sphere). Their agriculture-oriented economies are threatened by climate change, and many of them lie low on coastlines or are small islands and are therefore vulnerable to rising sea levels. With nearly half dependent on food imports, and large swathes of the population in all of them sapped by chronic malnourishment, rising food prices pose another threat.

The UN is working in support of adoption of a new 10-year programme at the fourth global conference in as many decades on the “LDCs,” or least developed countries, set for May in Istanbul, Turkey. The programme builds on the movement among the LDCs themselves for self-reliance and economic capacity. Jobs, disaster resilience, food and nutrition security and clean-energy growth are among the key planks.

The Secretary-General will also take steps to ensure implementation of the outcome of last year’s General Assembly plenary on the Millennium Development Goals. The special summit produced a five-year action plan and concrete resource commitments, especially on maternal mortality and child health.

Preparations for the 2012 conference on sustainable development (following through on the 1992 Earth Summit, and again taking place in Rio de Janeiro) are already under way.

The key in 2011 will lie in identifying and harnessing the potential of a new “green” economy to the global urgency to recover from recession, and using that as a way to set in motion action on broader sustainable development issues.

The journey to Rio will be aided by a blue-ribbon panel looking for large-scale solutions on the broad issue of sustainable development. The Secretary-General appointed High-Level Panel on Global Sustainability co-chairs Tarja Halonen and President Jacob Zuma – the presidents of Finland and South Africa, respectively – and members who include the author of the first comprehensive statement on sustainable development principles, Gro Harlem Brundtland, to find ways to lift people out of poverty while tackling climate change and ensuring environmentally-friendly economic development. The Panel’s report comes near the end of the year, ahead of Rio 2012.

## 2. NEGOTIATIONS AND NATIONAL ACTIONS ON CLIMATE CHANGE

A series of positive steps on climate change agreed in Cancun at the end of last year serves as a springboard for the “Conference of Parties” talks (COP-17) coming up in South Africa in November-December 2011.

Late at night on the concluding day of the December conference in Cancun, rich and poor countries reached a compromise that commits all parties to cutting emissions. The Cancun package includes an agreed target of holding global temperature rise to less than 2 degrees centigrade (3.6 Fahrenheit); a new “green fund” to help poor countries cope with climate change; and a new plan to halt deforestation.

Look for the UN System to follow up on Cancun by promoting action by national governments and businesses that significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions and support adaptation and mitigation. Areas that were singled out as most ready for action in 2011 are deforestation, clean technology for developing countries, and coordination on measures for adapting to the effects of climate change.

## 3. WOMEN

The United Nations begins the year with a major new agency with tremendous potential: UN Women. It needs to be built up in 2011 into a fully integrated, fully operational and fully funded force for change, the Secretary-General told the General Assembly.

Women’s advancement is becoming a hallmark theme of the Ban administration. Initiatives of the Secretary-General on maternal and child health (see #1 above), and on eliminating violence against women and children, are attracting strong



UN Photo/Albert Gonzalez Farran

A voter from Zam Zam Internally Displaced Persons Camp, North Darfur, submits her ballot on the first day of Sudan’s national elections in 2010.

global support. The Secretary-General plans to continue to increase the number of women in senior leadership posts and at the mid-management level in the UN.

## 4. A SAFER AND MORE SECURE WORLD

With the UN’s portfolio of peacekeeping operations at a near-record high (nearly 120,000 military, police and civilian personnel in 15 peace operations worldwide), the Secretary-General will be engaged with Member States on assisting priority countries at critical transitional junctures. He will need to draw on support for enhanced peacekeeping and peacebuilding measures, and enlist the cooperation of regional and sub-regional organizations.

The UN is coming off a year of discernible progress on a number of nearly intractable national situations:

- The referendum in Sudan is proceeding smoothly, but the real challenge lies ahead in resolving issues of borders, movements of people, resource-sharing and the status of Abyei. Peacekeepers are saving lives in Darfur and the killing of civilians has been dramatically reduced over the past five years.
- The UN Security Council honoured the Secretary-General’s January request for peacekeeping reinforcements in Côte d’Ivoire, authorizing 2,000 new troops. The move followed incidents where national civilians as well as UN troops were fired upon. “We will not be intimidated,” the Secretary-General has said, underscoring that Côte d’Ivoire has a legitimately elected government and that the previous incumbent must stand aside. Those who violate international law will be held accountable, the Secretary-General has warned.
- In Somalia, the United Nations is providing key logistical support to African Union forces – who are operating under



Shipyard facility in Bangladesh, one of the 48 Least Developed Countries (LDCs). The Fourth UN Conference on the Least Developed Countries takes place May in Istanbul (see calendar on the following page).

the most difficult and dangerous of circumstances – as they work to help the Transitional Federal Government expand its authority.

- Most of the Democratic Republic of the Congo is now free of armed conflict; and UN peacekeepers are working hard to bring long-elusive peace to the country's eastern regions.
- The release of Aung San Suu Kyi by the Myanmar Government was achieved through relentless pressure from multiple directions, including the UN.

## 5. HUMAN RIGHTS AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Resolve in Côte d'Ivoire is an indication of the Secretary-General's determination to "move the world to an era of accountability," as he promised the General Assembly. He cited the role of the recently strengthened International Criminal Court, and urged Member States to use Human Rights Council reviews as an opportunity to upgrade their own rights standards.

Late in January, the Secretary-General's Special Advisers on the Prevention of Genocide and the Responsibility to Protect warned of the possibility of genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and ethnic cleansing in Côte d'Ivoire.

They urged action in line with the "responsibility to protect," to avert the risk of genocide and ensure the protection of all those at risk of mass atrocities.

## 6. IMPROVED RESPONSE TO MAJOR HUMANITARIAN CRISES

The UN will need to draw on lessons from last year's array of crises, including major human catastrophes in Haiti and Pakistan.

"Looking ahead," the Secretary-General told the General Assembly, "we will implement lessons learned to strengthen leadership, improve accountability, and build capacity to rapidly scale up operations on the ground."

Crises tend to strike when least expected, so the UN regards it as important to build in a strategic approach ahead of time. This means planning for future economic growth and sustainability, integrating disaster risk reduction and preparedness with civil authority.

## 7. DISARMAMENT AND NON-PROLIFERATION

This year will see a push for ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, along with full implementation of the commitments agreed to by the 2010 Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference – the first successful NPT review in 10 years. The Secretary-General's Five-Point Action Plan will serve as the UN's guiding reference point.

The Secretary-General further advised the General Assembly that he will continue to engage with Member States on revitalizing the Conference on Disarmament. He addressed the January meeting in Geneva of the Conference's 2011 session. He can be expected to push as well for action on nuclear security and potential nuclear terrorism.

## 8. STRENGTHENED UNITED NATIONS

Work is ongoing on a more modern, flexible, faster-moving United Nations, adapted to the challenges of the 21st century. Transparency and accountability are watchwords. Areas of continued strengthening for 2011 include:

- protection of UN staff;
- refinement of a UN recruitment system for a modern, multi-functional and mobile work-force with coherent system-wide conditions of service;
- engagement with Member States in reforming the budget process;
- increased use of advanced information and communications technology.

## KEY DATES ON THE UN 2011 AGENDA

**24 January**

Opening of the annual session of the Conference on Disarmament | *Geneva*

**24 February**

UN Women launch event | *New York*

**28 February – 25 March**

Human Rights Council, 16th Session | *Geneva*

**7 – 8 March**

UN Conference on Sustainable Development, Second PrepCom | *New York*

**9 – 13 May**

UN Conference on the Least Developed Countries (LDC IV) | *Istanbul, Turkey*

**29 May**

International Day of UN Peacekeepers | *Worldwide*

**12-30 September**

Human Rights Council, 17th Session | *Geneva*

**28 November – 9 December**

UNFCCC Conference of the Parties (COP-17)  
*Durban, South Africa*

**December (date TBC)**

Report of the High-level Panel on Global Sustainability | *New York*