

FULL TRANSCRIPT OF PRESS CONFERENCE
New York, 15 September 2011

SG: Thank you. Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. It is a great pleasure to see you as we are preparing for the 66th session of the General Debate. Once again, this is a good opportunity for us to share our views and listen to your views too. I trust everybody will be busy. I trust you will be wearing your running shoes.

Our agenda will be crowded, the pace even faster than usual.

World leaders will be coming together at a moment of uncommon turbulence and high anxiety.

The global economic crisis continues to shake banks, businesses, governments and families around the world.

We face an extraordinary array of geopolitical and humanitarian challenges – famine in Somalia, the aftershocks of the Arab Spring, ongoing conflicts in some countries and difficult transitions in others.

All this is in addition to the deeper political, economic and environmental transformations that are reshaping our world.

So far, we know that 121 heads of state and government will attend. Of these, 12 are women leaders. For the first time in the 66-year history of the United Nations, a woman leader will be the first speaker of the General Debate, she is the Brazilian president, Dilma Rousseff.

Next week, in my speech to the General Assembly, I will share my vision of the challenges and the way ahead. I have already discussed with Member States, [up to] early this week.

It begins with the passionate conviction, drawn from my five years of experience as UN Secretary-General, that the United Nations has never been more needed. In this age of anxiety, the world's people look to us for answers and action.

-- We know that the UN remains our best hope for building a safer, more secure and just world.

-- We know that saving the planet requires us to invest in people, particularly women and youth. Sustainable development is the way of the future.

-- We know that we must place new emphasis on prevention, both of conflicts and natural disasters.

-- We know that we must devote new effort to assist nations in transition – from war to peace, autocracy to democracy, poverty to prosperity.

-- We recognize the power of partnership. Consider the events of the past year – Libya and Côte

d'Ivoire, the Arab Spring, a series of natural disasters, the ongoing economic crisis. In all these, the UN responded effectively because we worked closely with international partners, particularly regional organizations such as the African Union, Arab League, Organization of Islamic Cooperation, and the European Union, and many others. During my second term, we will continue to reach out across the full spectrum of our work.

-- Lastly, we will continue the work to put our UN house in order. Transparency and accountability remain our watchwords. At a time of austerity, we must do more with the resources we have, not those we might wish to have.

On the margins of the General Debate, we will also host a series of important meetings that will carry our agenda forward.

We start, on Monday, with a symposium on counter-terrorism. Having just observed the anniversary of September 11th - the tenth anniversary - we can say one thing with certainty - the terrorist threat has not gone away. Witness the recent attacks in Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan and India, to name but a few.

Increasingly, the United Nations is a target - most recently in Nigeria. Monday's meetings will aim to strengthen the global response. As for the United Nations, let me say that we will be conducting a broad review of our security. We will not retreat into some fortress UN, but we will protect our staff.

Building on this week's sessions on malaria, we will take several other big steps on global public health.

That begins with Monday's high-level meeting on non-communicable diseases - a first for the General Assembly. Three out of every five deaths worldwide are caused by cancer, diabetes, cardio-vascular and lung disease. More than 80 percent of these are in low- and middle-income countries. This is not just a matter of public health. It is a threat to development and stability.

At last year's General Assembly, we launched the Every Woman Every Child initiative. It raised \$40 billion and became a model for broad-based international partnership.

Next Tuesday, we will apply it to another global challenge: Sustainable Energy for All.

On Wednesday, we have an important high-level meeting on nuclear safety and security. We will again explore ways to advance the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty - key to our effort to create a nuclear-weapon-free world.

A related issue is the safety and security of nuclear installations. Nuclear energy may well be the future for many nations, but it is important that we develop the strongest possible international safety standards.

Let me close with a few words on recent political developments:

Next week we will host a special session on Libya, on September 20th – a high level meeting will be held on Libya. I look forward to prompt Security Council action on my proposals for a UN support mission to help the transitional authorities and the Libyan people during this critical post-conflict phase. My Special Advisor for Post-Conflict Planning, Ian Martin, is currently in Libya with a small core team. Their consultations will focus on three priorities: elections, policing and transitional justice.

We will also make a special plea for the Horn of Africa. The number of people in need has grown – from 12.4 million to 13.3 million people. In Somalia, in particular, the famine has spread. At least 750,000 people remain at risk. We have asked for \$2.4 billion in assistance; so far, we have received two-thirds of that amount. I hope to make up the remainder next week. On the Middle East: I am profoundly troubled by the lack of progress in the peace negotiations. It is vital that they resume. Ending the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and achieving a two-state solution is long overdue. Time is not our friend.

On Syria: For six months, we have seen escalating violence and repression. The international community has repeatedly appealed to President Assad to stop – most recently the foreign ministers of the Arab League. He has repeatedly pledged to do so and to carry out reforms consistent with the aspirations of his people. Once again, I urge him to keep his word.

Ladies and Gentlemen, thank you very much for your attention, and now your questions.

Q: Mr. Secretary-General, on behalf of the United Nations Correspondents Association, welcome, and welcome back to the this traditional format for your press conference. We really appreciate it. And my question is this: Facing the tough countdown for the Palestinian issue, what can you do more in the coming hours as Secretary-General for the return to the negotiating table or for their request to be a state? And what is the risk for the United Nations in having the Palestinians considered or recognized by the General Assembly as an observer State? Thank you.

SG: Ending the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and achieving the two-State solution is an aspiration and very important goal which has not been realized. It has been long overdue. That is why our collective priority must remain to create conditions for resumption of dialogue and negotiation to resolve all permanent status issues. The UN Charter is quite clear that the recognition of a State and membership in the United Nations are issues for Member States to decide and other UN intergovernmental bodies.

Q: Thank you, Mr. Secretary. The issue of the day: climate change. You have made saving the planet, as you mentioned, and climate change your personal mission. So, considering that and the importance of this issue to you, I ask the following question, and I ask, I know you don't like to get involved in internal politics, but considering the significance of this issue in the planet, a man running for the US presidency on climate change and global warming said, quote, "the

science is not settled on this. The fact of the matter is science is not settled on whether or not climate change is being impacted by man.” Is he wrong?

SG: I’ll try to speak more in general terms. You’ll remember that I visited South Pacific countries earlier this month: Solomon Islands and Kiribati. My visit to these countries was quite alarming and I was struck by what I have seen, particularly in Kiribati. I was given even a life jacket because they were afraid that the sea tide during night time may impact my hotel, a small hotel. The highest point in Kiribati is 3.5 metres, and normal sea tide rises from one metre to three metres. So, it’s very dangerous, and I met so many people who were just afraid of going to sleep. I saw these impacts of climate change that really reinforced my conviction that climate change is a real threat. Now, many countries and national governments, they have been taking their own domestic measures. I am not here in a position to say any specific comment or specific measures of any country. What I am urging the world leaders and all the leaders of the world is that instead of waiting until this globally binding agreement is reached, they have to take their own action to mitigate this climate change impact and to adapt and to mobilize necessary financing. I leave it to the national governments. But it is very, very important and urgent action [is needed].

Q: Governor [Rick] Perry talks about how Galileo was out-voted for a spell. This is a man who might be President; who might be meeting you in two years here, who would have tremendous influence in a nation.

SG: It’s a little bit premature for me to make any comment on that kind of thing.

Q: Mr. Secretary-General, I wonder if you could clarify a couple of things that you have said on Mid-East issues. On the Israeli-Palestinians, you said that you believe that any decision was up to Member States. Can we assume by this that if an application for UN membership was submitted to you that you would pass it on to the Security Council initially to consider? And when you were talking in your opening remarks about the Mid-East, you said time is not our friend. Could you elaborate a little more on what you meant about that? And I am asking the clarification, the follow-up questions. And also, on Syria, in addition to urging President Assad, to live up to the reforms he has promised, after six months, isn’t there anything else that you think that should be done by world leaders and the international community?

SG: On the admission of a State into the United Nations, this is an issue to be decided by Member States in accordance with the Charter provision: first, they should go to the Security Council and get the recommendation by the Security Council, and that should be decided by a two-thirds majority of the General Assembly. My role as Secretary-General in this admission of a State is limited to a technical issue. When I receive an application from a State for admission into the United Nations, I review all these technical issues - whether this application is in proper

form and stating that they are committed to implementing all the Charter provisions. Then, I refer it to the Security Council. I have not received any application yet. If I receive it, then I will refer [it] to the Security Council. You have raised three questions; what was the second question?

Q: The other one was time is not our friend in the Middle East.

SG: It has been long overdue. The two parties have been negotiating, the negotiations have been up and down. And it is really high time to resolve this issue, to realize a two-State solution where Israelis and Palestinians can live side by side in peace and security. That is the vision agreed upon by the two sides and supported by all the countries around the world. So, I am asking them to enter into a meaningful negotiation. And the international community has a duty to create some conditions favourable to this. And that means Israel has a duty to create such conditions. The issuing of all these settlements, new settlements, has not been favourable, has not been helpful. At the same time, the Palestinians should also try to sit together with the Israeli people. I am sympathizing with all these frustrations of the Palestinian people whose aspirations for an independent state has not been realized in the context of this two-State solution. That is why I am calling that time is not our friend. On the third issue on Syria: It has been almost six months [and] I have been speaking with [Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad] several times. He made all these promises; but these promises have become now broken promises. And he has been meeting several high-ranking leadership, including most recently League of Arab States Secretary-General. And there was a very urgent appeal from the whole League of Arab States. Now, when he is not keeping his promises, then enough is enough. The international community should really take some coherent measures and speak in one voice.

Q: Secretary-General, first of all I have to apologize that I have to leave immediately after you give me this response. My question is on Kosovo. I am on the air so I really apologize for that. So, on Kosovo, as you know tonight at approximately 6 p.m., Russia and Serbia requested the urgent meeting of the Security Council. What are your general feelings regarding Kosovo? Are they going in the right direction? You have a new appointee there. What can you tell us about this?

SG: I am deeply concerned over the recent public pronouncements surrounding the establishment of customs controls in northern Kosovo and their impact on peace and stability on the ground. I have received a letter from the Serbian Foreign Minister asking me to take necessary action. I understand that, as you said, the Security Council is going to deal with this matter. I call on all concerned to refrain from unilateral actions which could escalate tensions in the area. I urge Pristina and Belgrade to continue the European Union-facilitated dialogue and build on its success so far, and to take practical steps toward the implementation of the agreements reached so far. I also urge them to make every effort to avoid an escalation of tensions and prevent confrontation and violence in northern Kosovo. UNMIK, the United

Nations Interim Administration Mission, is working closely with all sides to identify a way forward that will ensure that stability, security and peace throughout Kosovo is safeguarded. I expect that all international presences in Kosovo will discharge their mandated duties accordingly.

Q: Thank you, Secretary-General. My question is about the high-level meeting on nuclear safety. According to my understanding, the accident in Fukushima is one of the reasons that you have decided to hold this meeting. In that context, what kind of role do you expect the Japanese new Prime Minister to make this discussion go forward? And, as you said, and according to your report released yesterday, you emphasized the importance of nuclear power plants to supply needed energy. But on the other hand, the Japanese Prime Minister doesn't seem too positive to build nuclear power plants. What's your idea about his nuclear policy? Is it realistic or not?

SG: As you may remember, in April of this year, I visited Chernobyl, the site of the nuclear accident explosion, 25 years ago. Then we have seen this terrible accident - nuclear accident - in Fukushima, compounded by the tsunami. All of these cases have prompted me to think, as the Secretary-General, about how we can ensure nuclear safety. At that time, I had strongly urged the international community to upgrade their nuclear safety standards. In that regard, the high-level meeting on September 22nd, where many world leaders will participate, including Prime Minister [Yoshihiko] Noda, will be a very important opportunity. Of course, there was a ministerial meeting organized by the IAEA [International Atomic Energy Agency] Director General on the ways and means, on how the international community can work together. This will provide a good basis for our discussions. As you may again remember, I have instructed all the United Nations agencies to conduct a UN system-wide assessment on this issue. I have received that assessment report yesterday, it has been released. Again, this will provide a good basis to our discussions. I expect that Prime Minister Noda will share his experience, lessons learned, in the course of addressing this Fukushima nuclear accident, which will also be very valuable. As an outcome of this meeting, we hope that the international community leaders will reaffirm their commitment to strengthen nuclear safety. And I am sure that this will also give a good basis of discussions for [the meeting] in Korea, in Seoul, next year, to deal with nuclear security. On nuclear power energy, I believe that that will continue to be an important source of energy. But there should be a strengthened, upgraded code of safety. It is up to the Member States which sources of energy they should employ. There are many sources of energy. At this time, the United Nations, as part of sustainable development, stresses the importance of doubling the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix. Thank you.

Q: Thank you, Mr. Secretary-General. As part of the issue of the challenges in the Middle East, I would like to raise the question of natural resources, drilling for gas in the Mediterranean Sea. This issue is really dangerous, because Turkey is taking the lead. There is a former Turkish ambassador who said that there is a consortium, or a deal made between Israel and Cyprus on

this matter, and Turkey is saying that it could escalate and it could be a problem. And this issue could escalate because Turkey is also willing to support Lebanon on this matter, because Lebanon has a problem with Israel. What are the steps taken by the UN in this matter?
Demarcation and drilling gas.

SG: I am aware of this dispute over maritime explorations between Israel and Lebanon. This has become one of the sources of dispute between the two countries, and I have received letters from the respective parties - both Lebanon and Israel. The United Nations' position is that this should be dealt with through their bilateral negotiations to determine the exact area of their exclusive economic zone area. At this time, I am just urging them to engage in further dialogue. Since you mentioned Turkey, again, I am very much concerned about this deteriorating relationship between Israel and Turkey over the release of the flotilla incident Palmer Report. Again, they are two very important countries in the region. Their harmonious cooperation will be very important in promoting Middle East peace and stability in the region. As Secretary-General, I have released this Palmer Report even though I have not engaged in any substantive recommendations. This is an independent report. I sincerely hope that their relationship will be normalized as soon as possible.

Q: Mr. Secretary-General, thank you. Last year, when the floods struck Pakistan, you played a leading role in organizing support for the flood victims. You organized a high-level conference for pledges. You also even paid a visit to Pakistan to meet the flood victims. Unfortunately, the floods have struck again. What are your plans this time round, when the floods are even more deadly than last year's floods?

SG: I have discussed this matter with President [Asif] Zardari of Pakistan, and I am very sad that Pakistan has been again struck by a very severe flood, after last year's huge, destructive, damaging, flood. We have dispatched a high level mission immediately, and I have received reports from them that the extent of damage was as severe as the last one. It was quite striking again, that Pakistan has been hit by this natural disaster. We will try to mobilize all necessary humanitarian assistance. This issue is now being very seriously considered - what humanitarian course of action will have to be taken. I believe that within a few days the United Nations will be in a position to first determine the damage, as well as the course of humanitarian actions.

Q: Secretary-General, may I just follow up before I ask you my question, I want to follow up to Edie's. You said, in answering the question on Syria, you said, "enough is enough," that something has got to be done. What is that something? Are you calling on the Russians to stop opposing sanctions, or what is that something that you had in mind? And my question is really about Palestine. Legally, you are in a position to accept a move by Palestinian Observer State - if it becomes one - to what do you call it that treaty - the Rome Statute - so that they can be able to become part of the International Criminal Court. As a depository, you can accept that legally.

Are you willing to exercise that right? Are you willing to accept it once it comes to you as a principle? And since you are a man who upholds the principal of justice in everything you have done, do you feel that the Palestinians deserve equal justice to others, or should there be an exception because circumstances? Thank you.

SG: On your first question, on Syria: Any specific measure should be decided by the Member States of the United Nations - the Security Council and other bodies. The Human Rights Council has decided to establish an international commission of inquiry. We have to assess the violation of human rights, which have happened during the course of these five months of demonstrations and oppressive, very repressive handling of these demonstrations. On this observer status, I know that in the past, the Secretary-General, on certain cases, acted directly to provide certain states with observer status or observer facilities, rather than observer status – observer facilities. In such a case, the General Assembly had not taken any decision on that decision. However, in the case of Palestine, it is quite a different case. The General Assembly has already granted a specific observer status, in accordance with Resolution 52/250 of 7 July 1998. Therefore, any change in that status would require a decision of the General Assembly.

Q: This was not my question, Secretary-General, my question was that as an observer state, if Palestine becomes an observer state, by the General Assembly resolution, they can go to you, as Secretary-General, and we are told that legally you own the decision to accept or to not accept the ratification of the treaty, as a depository of the International Criminal Court.

SG: The ICC.

Q: My question is about the ICC. Do you have any problem accepting that?

SG: I don't want to prejudge what may or may not happen here at the United Nations on this particular case. Let me have some other opportunity to answer your question, when something really happens.

Q: Thank you. I just wanted to ask about certain developments regarding the investigation of the bombing of the UN House in Nigeria, because about two weeks ago the Resident Coordinator of the UN in Nigeria said that UN officials were reading about the outcomes of the investigation in the press. So I wanted to know whether you have been briefed about the developments, and also, what is your response to the claim of responsibility regarding that attack that was made by Boko Haram?

SG: I think it is still in the process of making assessment. When it is necessary, I will have to share with the Security Council and the General Assembly - particularly the General Assembly - because it involves further strengthening the security of our missions - wherever [they] may be,

but according to the recommendations of this report, I am going to discuss again with General Assembly member states.

Q: What is your reaction to the claim of responsibility for the attack by Boko Haram?

SG: Boko Haram claimed that they were responsible for that, but we will have to wait for a final report.

Q: Mr. Secretary-General, you mentioned in your opening remarks that one of the important tasks of the United Nations is to help nations in transition, and God knows the Middle East has a few now. This morning, a few hours ago, it has been announced in Turkey the formation of the Syrian NTC - National Transitional Council - consisting of 115 members, 50 of them are inside Syria. Can we have your thoughts on such a move by the opposition, uniting their lines and forming a national Transitional Council? And on the question which my colleague Raghida raised concerning the ICC, I was in June in the Hague while the announcement on [Colonel Muammar Al-] Qadhafi was made, and I have asked the same question to [ICC Prosecutor Luis Moreno] Ocampo and to high officials within the ICC, if the Palestinians go to the General Assembly and obtain the recognition as a state and observer state status, is there any objection, is there any hurdle for them to join the ICC and the Rome Statute - the answer was no. Are they right in their assumption, or do you think there are any problems with that? Thank you.

SG: On this specific case of a Syrian organization established outside Syria, as the United Nations has not taken any official decision on this particular issue - it is different from the Libyan case. The Libyan National Transitional Council had been recognized by many members of the international community, and they have applied for confirmation of their status as a member, replacing the former regime, and I understand that the Credentials Committee has discussed this matter. But for that particular case, I think we will have to see how the situation evolves in the future. On this ICC case, I think I have already answered. It involves some legal issues, political issues, let us wait [to see] how the situation evolves.

Q: If they applied for membership of the ICC, and to be part of the Rome Statute, do you see any way you can prevent them from this? Because if they are a state, although they are not a member of the United Nations, but they are a recognized state - do you think there is any way, because according to - I have it on the record, in June, from Ocampo - that there isn't any, and they can ask for an investigation of crimes that took part in Palestine since 2002, not only the Gaza war?

SG: This Rome convention is different from the United Nations system. This is a separate, independent judicial organization based on Rome [Statue]. Therefore it is up to the State Parties to the ICC treaty, so let us wait for that.

Q: Thank you, Secretary-General. The relations between Egypt and Israel are deteriorating, and also between Turkey and Israel is falling apart. Do you think the question of Palestine is in relation of why these relations are falling apart, and if you ought also to speak with President Assad, if you at all want to speak with him, what would you tell him now? Thank you.

SG: I have spoken many times to President Assad. I told him to take decisive action, bold action, before it is too late. Then, he said he would engage in dialogue and he said that he would stop using military force in handling the demonstrations, but he has broken all the promises. That is why I said broken promises. I would repeat the same things. He must now listen to such urgent calls from the international community to stop killing his own people. On the Israeli-Palestinian relationship, as well as the Israeli-Egyptian relationship - all these are very important factors affecting overall peace and security in the Middle East. I am deeply concerned that with the lack of progress in Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, we are now experiencing, witnessing, a very deteriorating, rapidly deteriorating, situation between and among many important players in the region. The Israeli-Turkish relationship is now going in a very negative way. Again, this recent attack against the Egyptian Embassy - that was again very worrisome. I would really urge and appeal to the leaders in the region to improve their relationship on the basis of some strong, visionary leadership, for lasting peace and security in the Middle East. This is not only beneficial for individual countries concerned, but for the region, and peace and security have global implications. That is why the UN always has been discussing this matter during the last 60, 65 years. How many resolutions have we adopted at the Security Council and the General Assembly? Numerous resolutions have been adopted, but they have not been fully implemented. All this needs some strong political commitment and leadership, and with a vision.