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General Assembly’s annual debate opens tomorrow with focus on sustainable development

27 September - Monarchs, Presidents and Prime Ministers will gather by the scores at United Nations Headquarters in New York tomorrow for the General Assembly’s annual General Debate, with a small island State that symbolizes the combat against climate change – an urgent threat to global sustainability – set to occupy the first seat.

By tradition, each year, the Secretary-General draws lots to select which among the UN’s 193 Member States will occupy the first seat in the General Assembly Hall throughout the yearlong session, and this year Ban Ki-moon picked Tuvalu, a low-lying developing state of some 11,000 people in the South Pacific whose very existence is under dire threat from rising seas brought on by human-caused climate change.

Tackling climate change is one of the major objectives of the ambitious 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development which the Assembly adopted on Friday. Composed of 17 goals and 169 targets, the Agenda is an essential plank in the effort to wipe out poverty, fight inequality and enhance medical and educational access over the next 15 years. Unchecked climate change could undermine all the other goals.

Ahead of this 70th anniversary General Debate, Mr. Ban will present his annual report on the work of the Organization. This year’s Assembly President, Mogens Lykketoft of Denmark, will then deliver the keynote opening speech. He will then be followed by Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff, whose country holds the traditional role of first national speaker.

She will be followed by United States President Barak Obama as leader of the host nation. Other top leaders addressing the
Assembly on the first day of the Debate, which continues until October 3, include leaders from around the world.

Many of the leaders have already participated in the three day summit that launched the 2030 Agenda.

The new agenda is people-centred, universal, transformative and integrated. It calls for action by all countries for all people over the next 15 years in five areas of critical importance: people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership. The agenda recognizes that ending poverty must go hand-in-hand with a plan that builds economic growth and addresses a range of social needs, while tackling climate change.

The Summit opened Friday with the film screening, *The Earth from Space*, followed by musical performances by UN Goodwill Ambassadors Shakira and Angélique Kidjo, as well as a call to action by Nobel Laureate Malala Yousafzai along with youth representatives as torch bearers to a sustainable future.

Opening remarks were delivered by Yoweri Museveni, President of Uganda, Lars Løkke Rasmussen, Prime Minister of Denmark, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, and civil society representative Salil Shetty, Amnesty International Secretary-General.

**Global Goals provide opportunity to ‘quicken pace of action’ to end AIDS epidemic by 2030 – UN**

27 September - Speaking at United Nations Headquarters in New York, the leaders of Kenya and Malawi co-hosted today with the Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) a high-level panel discussion on scaling up efforts to end the epidemic by 2030.

“We should be able to enter this new era, the era of the SDGs, the Sustainable Development Goals, with hope,” said UNAIDS Executive Director Michel Sidibé, calling the adoption just two days ago of the the 2030 Agenda a window of opportunity to “quicken the pace of action.”

He also warned that the fight to end HIV/AIDS should focus on children and adolescents, particularly girls.

“We will not win against this epidemic unless we put adolescents at the centre of our fight,” said the Executive Director.

“Adolescent girls have up to eight times higher risk of HIV infection than boys. Today in Africa, the first cause of death among adolescence is AIDS.”

UN Messenger of Peace, actress Charlize Theron spoke about growing up in South Africa during the height of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, spotlighting how stigma and the lack of power and support surrounding the AIDS is preventing “an entire generation of young people who are trying so hard to take control of their health and their future.”

Ms. Theron also said that AIDS is the number one cause of death for adolescents in South Africa, calling young people a generation in jeopardy.

“Young people are falling through the cracks in our fight to end this epidemic,” said Ms. Theron. “But we have reason to have hope,” she added, “to reach our goal of ending AIDS by 2030. Because we know what works: empowering young people to take control of their health.”

Echoing Mr. Sidibé, Ms. Theron said that the fight to end HIV/AIDS must focus on young women and girls.

“But they cannot do it alone and they need all of us. Because an AIDS-free generation is not something we can [simply] create,” she said. “It’s time to act boldly on what we already know. It’s time to end AIDS.”
Statements were also made by the co-hosts, President of Kenya, Uhuru Kenyatta, and the President of Malawi Peter Mutharika, as well as the Prime Minister of Lesotho, Pakalitha Mosisili; the Prime Minister of St. Kitts and Nevis, Timothy Harris; the President of Mali, Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta; and the Deputy Secretary of State of the United States, Heather Higginbottom. A twelve-year-old Kenyan boy living with HIV also spoke about ending the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

UN deputy chief says world now has ‘legitimate hope’ that universal goal on energy will be met

27 September - United Nations Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson today welcomed the adoption of the first-ever universal goal on energy, but cautioned that it will take “arduous work” to reach the targets needed to end poverty and combat climate change as part of the new sustainable development agenda.

Mr. Eliasson spoke of the importance of working across economic, social and environmental dimensions to participants of a high-level event of Sustainable Energy for All, a multi-stakeholder partnership, on the sidelines of the UN Sustainable Development Summit, at which the new Goal was adopted along with 16 other goals and 169 targets to wipe out poverty, fight inequality and tackle climate over the next 15 years.

He cited as examples of successful partnerships already underway.

For example, he said, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the Roundtable on Sustainable Biomaterials, Bloomberg New Energy Finance, the Carbon War Room, KLM, Novozymes and the UN Foundation have partnered to scale up the development and deployment of sustainable bioenergy solutions.

And in Bangladesh, India, Mali and Mozambique, the Alliance for Rural Electrification and the OPEC Fund for International Development are working together to implement mini-grid projects.

Mr. Eliasson also commended domestic initiatives, such as Brazil’s successful “Light for All” programme, Saudi Arabia’s planned $109 billion dollar investment in solar energy, and India’s strong commitment to energy access for all by 2019.

“With Sustainable Development Goal 7, the United Nations has for the first time agreed on a universal goal on energy, with targets on access, renewables, efficiency, and means of implementation,” he said. “This is great news – not just for the energy community, but for sustainable development as a whole. We need sustainable energy for everything from ending poverty to combating climate change.

The Deputy Secretary-General said the Rachel Kyte, as the first Chief Executive Officer of the new “Sustainable Energy for All Partnership” will spearhead the UN system’s efforts towards achieving SDG7 from January 1, 2016 – the first day of the 2030 agenda.

Mr. Eliasson noted that progress is too slow in some areas of the world, most notably in sub-Saharan Africa, but with leadership and the foundations that are already laid, “we can have legitimate hope that we will achieve our goals by 2030.”

“But it is going to be an arduous work,” he said. “We have set the vision and direction. Now we must take the concrete steps forward in a determined way to the benefit of all.”
Informal talks on climate change reveal broad support for ‘durable’ deal in Paris, Ban reports

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon reported today that ahead of an upcoming United Nations climate conference in Paris, world leaders have voiced broad support for reaching a durable agreement that will accelerate investments in clean energy and spur a global, low-carbon transformation well before the end of the century, consistent with a below 2 degrees Celsius pathway.

“Leaders expressed their resolve to finalize a durable, meaningful agreement in Paris that applies to all countries,” Mr. Ban told reporters following a high-level working lunch held on the margins of the UN Sustainable Development Summit, which opened in New York on Friday and wraps up later today.

The Summit, which has adopted the landmark new sustainability blueprint, Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – composed of 17 goals and 169 targets to wipe out poverty, fight inequality and tackle climate over the next 15 years – is also being seen as an opportunity to continue momentum ahead of the Twenty-first meeting of States Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), informally known as COP 21, taking place in the French capital this December.

“Our meeting today was not a negotiation, but an informal gathering to inject greater political energy,” explained the UN chief at a press conference alongside Peruvian President Ollanta Humala and French President François Hollande, who both had participated in the working lunch and welcomed the generally positive nature of the discussions.

Stressing that the points of political convergence that had emerged must be translated into tangible action, the Secretary-General said that leaders had noted that a Paris agreement must be a turning point that sends a clear signal to citizens and the private sector that the transformation of the global economy is inevitable, beneficial, and already underway.

“There was also consensus that the agreement must strengthen resilience to climate impacts, with a focus on the poorest and most vulnerable. Leaders agreed that Paris must be the floor, not the ceiling, for collective ambition,” said Mr. Ban, adding that they had also agreed that a review process is needed to strengthen national commitments over time in order to limit global temperature rise to below 2 degrees Celsius.

While noting that collectively, national contributions are still not enough, the UN chief said he was pleased to hear leaders pledge to continue working closely with each other and with other leaders to remove political roadblocks.

The Secretary-General went on to highlight several upcoming meetings that “can help us cross the finish line in Paris,” including the October meeting of finance ministers in Lima, Peru; the G20 Summit in Turkey; the Cochabamba Summit and the Commonwealth Heads of Government in November.

“I appeal to all leaders to show flexibility, vision and leadership,” said Mr. Ban, noting that the UN general Assembly had just adopted the inspiring new 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and that momentum must continue with a “robust” agreement in Paris.

For his part, President Humala said participants in the working lunch had evinced a joint vision on the need to collectively tackle climate change. In that regard, there was general agreement on the need to keep the global temperature from rising more than 2 degrees Celsius, as well as ensuring support for developing countries to adapt to and mitigate the impacts of climate change.

He also urged countries heading to Paris to make their commitments on climate change and to likewise support the efforts of the French Government in hosting a successful meeting. “Humanity has the opportunity to build the strongest and most powerful alliance ever,” to protect the planet, he declared.

President Hollande said that from what he had heard at today’s meeting, none of the leaders had expressed any reservation.

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or opposition to reaching an agreement in Paris. There was a will towards sticking to the 2 degree Celsius pathway. With that in mind, he urged all those countries that had not presented their climate initiatives to do so ahead of COP 21.

He went on to stress the need to set out a five-year review mechanism that would help ensure that the goals agreed in Paris will be. President Hollande also said it was important for every country to implement a carbon pricing system, without which, “there will be no real change.”

He looked forward to reaching a “pre-agreement” ahead of COP 21 to set out a clear guide to what could be expected in Paris. “Everyone is convinced that there will be an agreement in Paris but the question is what type of agreement” and how strong the commitment will be to implement it, he concluded.

UN launches new joint partnership to help countries close gaps in primary health care

27 September - Underscoring the urgent need to transform how essential health care is delivered in low- and middle-income countries, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, World Bank Group and the UN World Health Organization (WHO) have launched a new partnership to support countries in improving the performance of primary health care.

The new partnership, the Primary Health Care Performance Initiative (PHCPI) was launched yesterday in New York on the margins of the three-day UN Sustainable Development Summit at an event co-hosted with the governments of Germany, Ghana, and Norway.

They release a new framework – ‘Roadmap: Healthy Systems-Healthy Lives’ – which can strengthen health system. This is a partnership can support countries to strengthen monitoring, tracking and sharing of key performance indicators for primary health care, according to WHO.

Primary health care is the pillar of health systems and is central to preventing epidemics like Ebola; improving women’s and children’s health; controlling major infectious diseases, and managing the rising burden of non-communicable diseases.

“Strong primary health care systems are where people turn in their communities to stay healthy and get care when they fall sick. When primary health care works, it can meet the vast majority of people’s health needs,” said WHO Director General Dr. Margaret Chan

“Yet Ebola revealed what can happen, starting with primary care, when health systems are broken and in need of repair,” she added.

Primary health care is a weak link in health systems in most areas, and many countries require better health data of their citizens, which will ensure a more effective planning and action. More than 400 million people worldwide lack access to essential health services typically delivered through primary health care.

For his part, Jim Yong Kim, President of the World Bank Group said that for the first time, the world has set a goal with specific targets for universal health coverage by 2030.

“To ensure that everyone has access to essential and affordable health services, countries must have strong primary health care systems to deliver them – that’s how we’ll reach the poorest and most vulnerable people with the care they need, in the most equitable way,” he said.

The PHCPI will bring together health policymakers, practitioners, advocates and development partners to process the improvement of primary health care system. The Initiative monitors “vital signs”, or performance indicators, of primary health care. It already tracks 25 signs in 135 data-available countries.

The new partnership will expand the availability of existing data to more countries because there are still major limitations...
The attack took place near Mellit, North Darfur, while the peacekeepers were escorting a UNAMID logistics convoy.

Mr. Ban appealed to the Sudanese authorities to investigate the incident and to bring the perpetrators to justice. He also called on the parties to the conflict in Darfur to respect the integrity of the peacekeeping force, and reminded them that they may be held accountable for any attacks on or threats against UNAMID.

The Secretary-General extended his condolences to the South African Government and people, and to the family of the deceased peacekeeper. He also wished the wounded a speedy recovery.

**At UN, global initiative launched boost protection of cultural heritage targeted by terrorists and traffickers**

**27 September** - With a host of world leaders meeting at United Nations Headquarters in New York as part of the opening of the 70th session of the General Assembly, key UN agencies joined Interpol today to launch a major new initiative to enhance the protection of cultural heritage targeted by terrorists and illicit traffickers.

The ‘Protecting Cultural Heritage – An Imperative for Humanity’ initiative was presented at the UN by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Italy and Jordan, with the participation of principals from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Interpol and the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), as well as ministers from various Member States.

“Culture is on the frontline of conflict – we must place it at the heart of peacebuilding,” said UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova.

For his part, the Executive Director of UNODC, Yury Fedotov, said it was important address trafficking and the destruction of cultural property as “crimes that strike at the very core of our civilization and heritage”.

“The religious and cultural heritage of the Middle East, the birthplace of civilization and religions, belongs to all humanity,” said Nasser Judeh, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Jordan.

The initiative will follow up on resolutions and decisions adopted by the UN Security Council, the UN General Assembly and other international bodies.

There has been a sharp increase in terrorist attacks and destruction of cultural heritage of countries affected by armed conflict, as well as the illicit trafficking and sale of cultural objects. These acts not only generate income for terrorist groups in the Middle East and beyond, but also constitute a tactic of war.
Meanwhile, Mireille Ballestrazzi, President of Interpol, highlighted the need “to combine our efforts and resources to efficiently curb this criminal phenomenon and protect the world’s cultural heritage for future generations”.

The ‘Protecting Cultural Heritage’ initiative is a project open to all Member States, international organizations and partners wishing to join forces in support of the protection of cultural heritage from destruction and/or illicit trafficking.

**Tackling water challenges an ‘urgent task’ as world moves forward on Global Goals – UN deputy chief**

27 September - United Nations Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson today urged swift action on the newly-adopted Global Goals directly related to the protection and equitable use of the planet’s precious water resources, as discussion continued at UN Headquarters on the post-2015 Sustainable Development Agenda.

Speaking at a meeting of the Friends of Water Steering Committee, Mr. Eliasson welcomed the Prime Minister of Thailand Chan-o-cha and President Emomali Rahmon of Tajikstan and spoke of the challenges that the Committee faced.

“Worldwide, water demand is projected to grow by over 40 percent by 2050,” said the Deputy Secretary-General. “Population pressures, climate change and energy and agricultural needs have made finding sustainable solutions to water-related challenges an urgent and crucial task for ever more regions in the world.”

He then went on to highlight the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the place of water-related challenges within it.

“The litmus test for this new agenda will be implementation,” said Mr. Eliasson, “how to translate this vision into realities on the ground. Substantially transforming societies and economies requires political will, vigorous efforts, as well as ingenuity and innovation,” he added.

The Deputy Secretary-General also noted the importance of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda in providing a foundation for enhanced global partnerships that will ensure effective implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and spoke about the importance of collaborative efforts between governments, international and regional organizations, the private sector, civil society and academic to find new ways to take action on the global water crisis.

He also highlighted the work that UN-Water would be doing to provide support to ongoing efforts, and thanked Secretary-General Michel Jarraud of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) for his excellent leadership of UN-Water. He also welcomed Director-General Guy Ryder of the International Labour Organization (ILO) as the new Chair of UN-Water.

“Water must never be a reason for rivalry or competition,” he said. “Water must be a source of cooperation and of shared security and prosperity. Let us remember that water is our primary source of life. So this is also, fundamentally, an existential challenge and a moral obligation.”
Central African Republic: UN and relief agencies condemn renewed violence against civilians

27 September - The interim United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator, Marc Vandenberghe and the entire humanitarian community in the Central African Republic (CAR) today condemned renewed violence against civilians in the capital, Bangui, and called on all parties to respect international law, to protect civilians and ensure that they can relocate from insecure areas.

“Under international humanitarian law, I call for the respect of obligations incumbent on all parties to protect all civilians in CAR and to preserve health facilities, enabling injured people, other patients and health workers to have free and safe access to these facilities” Mr. Vandenberghe said in a press release.

According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), on 26 September, violent clashes erupted in Bangui after the death of a young Muslim taxi motorcyclist. The incident left over a dozen people dead and several others injure. Thousands of people have fled the areas with heightened tension to seek refuge, mostly with host families and in displacement sites. Many houses were burned or looted.

Extremely concerned about the high number of victims, damaged houses and the new wave of displacement, Mr. Vandenberghe said the situation represents a big step backwards on the return plan set-up by the Humanitarian Country Team for internally displaced persons. “I would like to express my sincere condolences to the families of the victims and to wish a speedy recovery to the injured people.”

Bangui still has 30 sites which host some 27,300 displaced people before the incidents happened. Over the past few years, the country experienced a major political crisis which continues to affect almost the entire population. About 2.7 million people, over half of the population, are in dire need of assistance.

On World Day, UN highlights ‘transformative’ potential of tourism for sustainable development

27 September - Marking the observance of World Tourism Day, senior United Nations officials are spotlighting the transformative potential of one billion tourists and their increasing capacity to help boost socio-economic and environmental development.

“The potential of tourism for sustainable development is considerable,” stressed UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in a message on the World Day.

“As one of the world’s leading employment sectors, tourism provides important livelihood opportunities, helping to alleviate poverty and drive inclusive development,” said Mr. Ban.

The tourism sector plays an important role in fostering multicultural understanding and raising awareness on the need to preserve cultural and natural heritage.

As the world prepares to act on a new Sustainable Development Agenda, said the UN chief, tourism should be recognized for its ability to create jobs, promote local culture and products and champion the conservation and sustainable use of marine and terrestrial habitats.

In his remarks highlighting this year’s theme ‘One Billion Tourists, One Billion Opportunities,’ Taleb Rifai, Secretary-General of the UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), said that these big numbers represent more than just economic strength as they help to “address some of the world’s most pressing challenges, including socio-economic growth, inclusive development and environmental preservation.”
“These billion tourists have made tourism a leading economic sector contributing 10 per cent of global GDP and 6 per cent of the world’s total exports,” said Mr. Rifai.

Not only is tourism a valuable source of livelihood for millions of people, but it is also a getaway to great understanding of the world beyond our borders, according to Mr. Rifai.

“Let us celebrate the value of the ‘One Billion Tourists’ and work together in making tourism a true instrument of opportunity and inclusion,” urged Mr. Rifai.

Celebrated annually on 27 September, World Tourism Day serves to raise awareness among the international community of the importance of tourism and the contributions it can make in the economic, political and social sectors.

**At Global Citizen Festival, Ban tells crowd to ‘stand up for a better world,’ make Global Goals a reality**

27 September - “Take your passion and compassion – and let’s make the global goals a global reality,” United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon urged a massive crowd at New York’s Central Park last night, where he joined a star-studded roster of the world's leading performers to kick-off the fourth annual Global Citizen Festival.

This year's celebration of global unity and a reaffirmation of the will to address the planet's most pressing issues comes as world leaders have adopted at the UN Sustainable Development Summit the new 2030 Agenda, composed of 17 goals and 169 targets to wipe out poverty, fight inequality and tackle climate over the next 15 years.

“The Global Goals for sustainable development are a promise from your leaders. Hold them to it. Demand that they deliver,” the Secretary-General said in his remarks to the Global Citizen’s Concert, which included performances by international pop star Beyoncé and featured major presentations by Nobel Laureate Malala Yousafzai and United States First Lady Michelle Obama.

Mr. Ban went on to tell the attendees: “Share what you have learned today. The United Nations needs you […] you will be the first generation that ends global poverty. You must be the generation to tackle climate change before it is too late.”

Already in its fourth year, the Global Citizen Festival was initiated by the Global Poverty Project which is campaigning to secure new commitments to health, education, women's equality and global partnerships. The enthusiastic audience had received free tickets to the concert online after helping to spread the word or by volunteering to help end poverty.

“Don’t stand by. Don’t stand back. Stand up. Stand up for justice. Stand up for dignity. Stand up for a better world,” concluded the UN chief, urging the attendees to take their passion and compassion and make the Global Goals a global reality.
Global Goals cannot be achieved without ensuring gender equality and women’s empowerment – UN chief

27 September - As world leaders continued their Summit on the Sustainable Development Goals, UN Women and China co-hosted a landmark event today on gender equality and women’s empowerment at which Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon declared that the new Global Goals could not be achieved “without full and equal rights for half of the world’s population, in law and in practice.”

At the high-level ‘Global Leaders’ Meeting on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment: A Commitment to Action’ world leaders are expected to make concrete commitments and firm pledges to overcome gender equality gaps. The event was convened in New York at UN Headquarters on the closing day of the three-day UN Sustainable Development Summit.

“Today, world leaders are signalling their personal responsibility for gender equality and women’s empowerment,” said Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon at the event. “This is as it should be.”

But, said Mr. Ban, while progress has been made in many areas, there was still a long way to go.

“We cannot achieve our 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development without full and equal rights for half of the world’s population, in law and in practice. We cannot effectively respond to humanitarian emergencies without ensuring women and girls are protected and their needs prioritized,” he declared.

UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka said: “The highest leaders in the land are taking personal responsibility for their commitment to gender equality and the empowerment of women.” She added that now, the world looks up to them to lead the game-changing actions that secure and sustain implementation. Today we take the first firm steps towards 25 September, 2030.

The UN chief commended the leadership of President Xi Jinping, and thanked both the Government of China and UN Women for organizing today’s event which, he said, marked the culmination of activities to mark the 20th anniversary of the landmark Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

He also called upon world leaders to commit to securing true gender equality.

“This means urgently addressing structural barriers, such as unequal pay,” said Mr. Ban, adding that it also meant recognizing women’s unpaid care burden, the right of women and girls to govern their sexual and reproductive health, ending violence against women and girls, building women’s equal participation in the political arena and in humanitarian response, conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

The Secretary-General also highlighted the importance of civil society, women’s organizations and human rights defenders in the work to drive the 2030 Agenda forward, and called upon the private sector to promote gender equality.

“We need a 50:50 Planet by 2030. Let’s step it up for gender equality,” he said. “As we look ahead to 2030, let us be able to say that today we marked a milestone in the quest to realize full and lasting gender equality.”