



The Responsibility to Deliver By Ban Ki-moon

The past year was difficult for us all. I have called it “the year of multiple crises.” The next promises to be even more so.

The challenges that lie ahead in 2009 — ranging from climate change to the economic meltdown — will test our commitments and good intentions as never before.

In the realm of human rights, we speak of the responsibility to protect. In the larger sphere of common international endeavor, we should speak of the responsibility to deliver. Looking back at 2008, I would say frankly that our record has been mixed.

I am pleased, for example, at the way the world has come together in the face of economic recession. Yet I fear we are only at the end of the beginning. This crisis will challenge the sense of global solidarity that is key to any solution.

I am pleased at how we responded to natural disasters from Myanmar to Haiti. Yet I am disappointed by the unwillingness of the government of Myanmar to deliver on its promises for democratic dialogue and the release of political prisoners.

UN forces have held the line in the Democratic Republic of Congo, with bravery under the difficult circumstances. Yet we have not been able to protect innocent people from violence. Our record on human rights is on trial — in many places, in many ways. But we must continue to stand strong on the principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

I believe we coped well with one of the year’s most serious issues. The food crisis no longer dominates news headlines but it has not gone away. The United Nations system has come together to tackle this problem in all its complexity: nutrition, agricultural production, trade and social protection. We are well on the way to changing decades-old policies in agriculture and public health—mainstays of our work in promoting the Millennium Development Goals and protecting those most vulnerable to climate change, poverty and economic crisis.

Of all the challenges before us, none is more important than climate change. A few weeks ago, I joined world leaders in Poznan, Poland. We recognized that climate change cannot await a resolution of the global economic crisis. Most accepted the need for what I call a “Green New Deal.” Investment in eco-friendly technology should be part of any global economic stimulus.

All agreed that there is no more time to waste. We have only 12 short months before Copenhagen. We must reach a global climate change deal before the end of 2009 — one that is balanced, comprehensive and acceptable to all nations.

Success will require extraordinary leadership. I myself will continue to push the pace and galvanize political will. I plan to convene a climate change summit at the beginning of the 64th General Assembly. But I expect that world leaders will need to meet before then if we are to conclude 2009 in triumph. Working together, we can fulfill our responsibilities to the planet and its people — our responsibility to deliver.

We should see the challenges of 2009 as opportunities for collaborative international action. We are entering a new multilateral era.

We face the immediate imperative of ending the violence in Gaza and southern Israel. The escalation and suffering of civilians are deeply alarming. A cease-fire must be put in place without delay. Regional and international partners must use their influence to bring about dialogue and a return to the negotiations that had been showing modest but encouraging signs of progress. There is an urgent need for Israelis and Palestinians to continue on the road to peace.

In Iraq, security has vastly improved. Provincial elections are scheduled for January. I urge Iraqi leaders to work together in a spirit of reconciliation as they assume full responsibility for their national affairs. All this requires strong UN support, and we shall give it.

The humanitarian situation in Zimbabwe grows more alarming every day. The nation stands on the brink of economic, social and political collapse. I said so to President Robert Mugabe at the recent summit in Doha. He promised to allow my envoy to enter Zimbabwe to facilitate a political solution. Now we are told that the timing is not right. If this is not the time, when is?

In Somalia, the danger of anarchy is clear and present. So is the need to act. Last week I proposed to the Security Council a series of steps that to advance the Djibouti peace process, deal with piracy and issues of humanitarian access, reinforce the current African Union mission in Somalia and set the stage for a possible UN peacekeeping operation.

I am also gravely concerned by the worsening humanitarian and security situation in Afghanistan. A political “surge” and a clear change of direction are required. We have made a great many promises to the people of this ravaged country. It is our responsibility to keep them.

The demands on the UN are growing. The challenges of our time are increasingly collaborative in nature. They require our full engagement, all nations working together—rich and poor, north and south, developed and developing.

Over the course of the past year, I held more than 700 bilateral meetings, including some 350 meetings with Presidents, Prime Ministers and Ministers of Foreign Affairs. I spent 103 days on the road, visiting 35 countries and flying more than 400,000 kilometers.

Numbers do not always equal results, but they are a measure of our effort. The world expects no less. It is our responsibility to deliver.

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Notes for editors:

The United Nations Country Team in the Lao PDR is committed to supporting the efforts of the Government to improve the life of all citizens, especially those most vulnerable. We shall continue to work closely with the Government and all development partners for the

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achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Our collective endeavour is to assist the people of Lao PDR to achieve progress and better standards of living for all.