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Secretary-General

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SECRETARY-GENERAL DELIVERS GEORGE HERBERT WALKER, JR. LECTURE, URGES STUDENTS

CONTINUE YALE'S PROUD TRADITION, STEER WORLD TOWARDS BETTER FUTURE

Following are UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's remarks, as prepared for delivery, at the Yale University George Herbert Walker, Jr. lecture series, in New Haven on 13 November:

I am honoured to deliver the George Herbert Walker lecture. I have been privileged to work with members of his family through the years, including both Presidents Bush, 41 and 43.

It is also good to be here on campus again. I visited in January 2010, almost three years ago. It was one day after Haiti was struck by a devastating earthquake. President Levin and the Yale community generously contributed to help the Haitian people.

He has also actively participated in the Global Colloquium of University Presidents, which advances global thinking on a range of important issues, from climate change to gender empowerment and the Millennium Development Goals.

Yale is an extraordinary university that has made its mark in the United States and around the world. Yale put its stamp on the United Nations literally.

The United Nations logo — a symbol of hope for people around the world — was designed by a Yale graduate named Donal McLaughlin. I proudly wear his design every day.

The logo signifies peace and better times ahead. It sends that message in many ways: on the blue helmet of a peacekeeper; on a flag showing refugees where they can find shelter; on the shirt of a relief worker who is bringing desperately needed food to hungry people. I saw that symbol myself as a young child in war-torn Korea, and it told me and my country that the world would be there for us.

Mr. McLaughlin showed great diplomatic skill and wisdom in bringing the logo into being. Governments wanted the logo to feature the earth, but differed on which side of the planet to show. Mr. McLaughlin's design depicted all continents equally.

Some people suggested that there should be links binding the countries together. Others feared this would look like the world was in chains. Mr. McLaughlin's solution was to frame the globe with olive branches, the timeless symbol of peace.

And so, the seal was born — a Yale's lasting legacy to the United Nations.

The world has changed dramatically since then. But, the need for hope remains. We are now living in a time of dramatic transition. The political landscape is shifting, as people across the world rightly demand freedom, accountability and equal opportunity. The economic landscape is also evolving, as new Powers emerge and global interdependence deepens. The changes are environmental, too, as we strive to pull back from overstepping the planet's natural limits.

This is a time of turmoil, vulnerability and change. We are living in an era of insecurity, inequality, injustice and intolerance. We face a burning question: how do we shape solutions for a more secure and prosperous future?

In my conversations with world leaders and encounters with people around the world, I return again and again to three common themes. First, leaders need to listen — really listen — to their people.

Second, all of us need to connect the dots among the challenges we face, so that advances in one area generate gains in others.

Third, we need to find linkages, not just among policies, but between people, and create new constellations of partnerships and alliances to get things done. That is the most effective way to solve problems in our networked world.

Let me focus first on the upheavals across the Arab world. For too long, people were denied opportunities, freedoms and dignity — their very voice. And for too long, too many trading and security partners of deeply flawed regimes were content with the repressive status quo.

Many leaders who failed to move with the democratic tenor of the times, indeed, who actively and violently suppressed their peoples' aspirations, are now gone from the scene, or may not be at the helms of their countries for much longer.

But, democracy is not assured. As several countries pursue transitions, uncertainty shadows hope. In others, leaders seem to think winds of change will not blow their way at all.

I am gravely concerned about Syria. Listen to your people, I told President Assad many times. But, in the face of peaceful protests, the regime resorted to force. It seemed to know no other way.

Each day in Syria brings new reports of appalling violations of human rights and tragic suffering. We tried to have a ceasefire on the Muslim holiday of Eid Al-Adha. Just a break from the immense trauma — a pause for people who had buried so many loved ones. I was deeply disappointed that both sides ignored and violated the ceasefire.

The United Nations is rushing medicine and food to Syrians inside of the country and to the hundreds of thousands who have fled to Syria's neighbours. Two and a half million people desperately need help. The coming winter and the escalating conflict could soon drive that number up to 4 million.

Even as we staunch the wounds, we have to try to stop the bloodshed. The Joint Special Representative for the United Nations and the League of Arab States, Lakhdar Brahimi, continues his vital work.

I have repeatedly warned the Government and the opposition that there is no military solution. Syria needs a clean break from the past. But, the transition they need can be achieved through negotiation and dialogue.

The risks to the wider region are clear. Already, we are seeing spill-over effects, inflamed tensions, and outbreaks of violence, in Syria's neighbours. Syria is a stark reminder of how much is at stake, and how much can be lost if the international community does not unite for peace, and if leaders do not heed the demands of their people for empowerment, openness and dignity.

Now, let me turn to a second twenty-first century phenomenon: the complex links among the challenges we face. Trade, travel, technology and Twitter continue to knit the world closer together. But, today it is not just people who are more interdependent. So are the issues.

We will not address climate change without sustainable energy. We will not promote decent work without quality education. We will not defeat hunger and disease without empowering women. Sustainable development requires us to make these associations.

We can see this clearly in Africa's Sahel region, where the interplay of poor governance, poverty and drought are causing immense suffering and instability. The people of the Sahel are being buffeted by repeated shocks: floods, droughts, and spiking food prices. The lawlessness is allowing extremism and international crime to take hold.

We must deal with these issues in a comprehensive way, not as isolated, unrelated problems. We must identify the crucial connections and then drive hard at them with integrated, well-planned solutions.

But, we know that we can never do this on our own. That leads me to my third twenty-first century challenge: building partnerships.

Governments may be central actors, but even they recognize the need to mobilize others: celebrities and doctors, CEOs and NGOs, imams, rabbis and priests.

Our Every Woman Every Child effort aims to save 16 million lives by 2011. Scaling Up Nutrition, the Zero Hunger Challenge, Sustainable Energy for All — these are all efforts that use the UN's broad convening power. Our Global Pulse project harnesses real-time digital data to combat poverty, hunger and disease.

We are also focusing on education through a new initiative called Education First, which aims to give every child the start in life they need and deserve. Today, 61 million children are out of school, and girls' education needs a special push. Poverty continues to hold many young girls back. So does discrimination and extremism, as we saw so tragically with the recent cowardly attack on Malala Yousufzai, the Pakistani teen who was shot with two other girls while trying to go to school.

The terrorists who attacked her showed what they fear the most: a girl with a book.

I used those words shortly after the shooting, and something remarkable happened. Someone began a campaign on Facebook and Twitter called "girl with a book". It is a simple and extremely powerful concept — people all over the world sharing an image of a girl reading a book as a message of solidarity and support for girls' education. Photos have been pouring in from Pakistan, Egypt, Cameroon, Brazil, Japan and beyond. Among the hundreds of photographs, you will see my own contribution, a snapshot of me reading to my granddaughter.

This "girl with a book" campaign is yet another example of the power of social media to inspire people, spread messages and generate wide-ranging partnerships for real change.

When I think of partnerships, I come naturally to the United States. That is because the United Nations and the United States are natural partners. We count on U.S. support, leadership and ideas. We share the same values — equality and human rights. We share an impulse, a calling to serve, to feed the hungry, to support democracy, to be generous and first on the scene in times of disaster.

And the United Nations is indebted to the United States for hosting our Headquarters in New York City. UN staff are part of the local community. We weather our storms together, including Hurricane Sandy. I spoke to the Governors of New York and New Jersey, as well as the Mayor of New York City to express our solidarity.

This is my first public opportunity to warmly congratulate President Obama on his re-election. I look forward to strengthening the U.S.-UN partnership even more in the years ahead. We share many goals, including ending the violence in Syria and getting the Middle East peace process back on track.

As the region undergoes fundamental changes, much is also at stake for Israel and the Palestinians. The cost of the continued stalemate and ongoing illegal settlements continues to rise with each passing day and each missed opportunity. The parties themselves, and the world at large, have a profound interest in a just and lasting peace.

A two-State solution remains the only viable option to end this conflict and the occupation that has endured for almost half a century. Realizing this vision requires more determination, not more delay.

The foundations for peace remain: UN Security Council resolutions, the Madrid principles, including land for peace, the road map, previous agreements between the parties and the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative.

As you know, the issue of Palestinian status at the United Nations is once again in the news. The Charter of the United Nations is clear. Such matters are solely in the hands of Member States.

I share the frustration that the two-State solution may seem ever more distant. As all involved now consider the options, we know actions have consequences. None of us would want to see harm to the prospects for peace. None of us should act in any way that would place a return to talks at risk. There can be no substitute for meaningful negotiations.

As I have warned repeatedly, without strong leadership by the parties and the international community, the two-State solution and the commendable institution-building achievements of the Palestinian Authority are in jeopardy.

I once again appeal to all those with influence: the Middle East peace process is on life support. Do not pull the plug. Breathe new life and hope now. The region and the world cannot wait.

We also need strong multilateral engagement to ensure the success of the democratic transitions that are under way across the world. We are pressing to achieve the Millennium

Development Goals by the agreed deadline of 2015, and to shape a new agenda beyond that date for progress in all countries.

Combating climate change is a paramount challenge. I was very encouraged to hear President Obama speak about the dangers of a warming planet in his remarks on election night. World leaders have agreed to forge a legally binding agreement by 2015, and we must hold them to that commitment.

The science is clear; we should waste no more time on that debate. I have seen with my own eyes, from the Arctic to Antarctica, from the Andes to Asia, the melting glaciers, the encroaching deserts, the gathering impacts in urban and rural areas alike. But, instead of seeing this as a prohibitively costly burden, let us look at the opportunities — the immense opportunities — of building a job-rich green economy.

Let us think big. Let us think together. Everything I have seen as Secretary-General convinces me that no country will be able to address its national problems unless it engages internationally. And we will not address global problems unless each country plays its part.

These are testing times. The human family is now more than 7 billion strong, vying for resources, jobs and the prospect of a decent life. The young people in the audience today are part of the largest generation of youth the world has ever known. I urge you to continue Yale's proud tradition of helping to steer the world towards a better future.

I ask all of you to be global citizens. Speak up. Get your leaders to do their part. Help us to rise above the dividing lines of religion, class, identity, to see the common good — to seize it. Let us work together to confront problems head-on, and shape solutions for the future. Let us show a passion for peace, and compassion for people.

Thank you.

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