

Thirteenth Sapru House – UN Lecture

by



H.E. Mr. Ban Ki-moon
United Nations Secretary General

on

"India and the United Nations in a Changing World"

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Thank you for your time to participate in this meeting. I would like to also thank all senior distinguished ambassadors from the Indian Foreign Service, and my colleagues travelling with me, and the UN Country Team, the Resident Coordinator. It is a great honour to participate and share some thoughts on my own views on how the international community and United Nations.



H.E. Mr. Ban Ki-moon delivering thirteenth Sapru House – UN Lecture.

Ambassador Gharekhan has just given me quite challenging questions even before we enter into Q&A. I will keep in mind how I can answer, but I think you should know much better than I know.

As Secretary-General I've been addressing lots of different groups of audiences - starting from politicians, professors, senior diplomats, scientists and business communities. One of the [more] difficult audiences is like yourselves - a group of senior diplomatic personalities - because to my mind there should be nothing which they do not know what I know.

That's my problem. If I address some group of business people or some other politicians then I should say very proudly something which they may not know but I know. But since we have been working in the same profession - but maybe I may be [doing] a little more than what you are doing. [inaudible] because I am dealing at this time with some current issues, including some future issues too.

And really, I am happy to back to New Delhi. Main Bharat vapas aake bahut khush hua. ["Meih Bharat vapas aakay Bo-hot kush hoo-ah." "I am very happy to be back in India."]

My relationship with India, as Mr. Bhatia said, "What I am here", I started from here 43 years ago in 1972. Since then I have been visiting India many times. I told them when I leaving here in 1975, I'm leaving half of my heart here. You know the very famous Frank Sinatra story - I left my heart here in New Delhi. I am returning regularly to check whether half of my heart is properly functioning. My surname 'Ban', literally speaking in Korean, means 'half'. Of course, there are some other better meanings, but 'half'. Somebody calls me 'half-Ban', or something like this. Whenever I come back to New Delhi, I become a full man. This is what I can tell you. I feel a really happy, special connection, now in addition to my professional career, I have some family here, which most of you know, so I do not repeat. I just met my Indian in-laws today, just before coming here.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is a great privilege for me to address Sapru House.

Nearly sixty years ago, my esteemed predecessor, Dag Hammarskjöld, I understand, he visited this Council, and he spoke passionately about collective security. He said, "The weakness of one is the weakness of all, and the strength of one ... is the strength of all."

That's what still rings true. That is why I am asking world leaders "Let's work together closely as one team." The UN really tries to work as one team. It looks like the UN is a very loose, big organization. Sometimes I do not even understand what exactly their mandates are. There are so many specialized agencies, funds and programs; they are

scattered all around the world. It seems very loose. But in my days as Secretary-General, my motto is One UN. Think and act and deliver as one - that's what we say DAO - Deliver as One. This is our catch phrase.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We are living in an era of test and challenge. Billions of people struggle in poverty - including some 500 million in India. Globally, there are more displaced people than at any time since the end of the Second World War.

Terrorist networks spread fear and instability across continents. We have seen such terrible things happen in Paris. In terms of number of people killed I think we have seen so many places. Most recently in Peshawar in Pakistan, 132 school children were killed. 12 journalists and policemen were killed in Paris. But they were striking at the heart of our freedom - our freedom of expression. That is why millions of people marched together with so many world leaders on Sunday. If not for Vibrant Gujarat I would have been there myself. But unfortunately I couldn't, I thought this was more important. But anyway There is a lot of religious, racial and ethnic intolerance, which fuels conflicts and distorts development.

At the same time climate change is impacting all our lives. Climate change is approaching much, much faster than we think.

Humanity can overcome these challenges by working in our shared interest, working as one, to have the strength of one become the strength of all. This is not a burdensome task - it is a rich opportunity. When I lived here more than 40 years ago, since then I have seen India's impressive advances over the decades. I see this country's great global potential. Today I will focus on three major roles India can play in addressing all these issues:

First: India as a driver for peace in the region and the world.

Second: India as a champion of human rights.

Third: India as a leader on clean development - clean sustainable development.

Those are three issues that cover all your lives and all the spectrums of human beings. In this key year for our common future, India has a great deal to contribute - and stands to benefit enormously.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,
Let me begin with regional security.

The world is looking to India to help advance peace, stability and prosperity in South Asia.

A secure regional environment will also help India reach its ambitious development goals. Regional stability requires engagement and collaboration.

I welcome India's leadership in deepening cooperation in South Asia. As the world's largest democracy, India has important lessons for others.

Across the region, political leaders must put aside long-standing grievances and seek new ways to peacefully end old disputes. This is especially the case for India and Pakistan.

The continued instability in Pakistan and Afghanistan is not only the responsibility of those nations. They need regional engagement to build stronger institutions, support economic growth and foster better relations.

Those challenges should be addressed through such initiatives as the Istanbul Process and growing bilateral and multilateral partnership agreements.

I encourage India's leaders to remain invested in helping Afghanistan to develop, including through education exchanges.

Afghanistan's security challenges cannot be solved only through military efforts. An Afghan-led political process focused on peace and reconciliation is essential - and it needs regional support like from India.

More broadly, South Asia faces the grave danger of nuclear weapons. Each addition to the arsenals raises the risks of a nuclear nightmare. India and Pakistan were among the more than 150 countries that reached this conclusion at three conferences on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons. I am troubled by the lack of disarmament globally.



Audience at the lecture.

Other nuclear States have announced limitations and reductions - but in some regions, including this one, arsenals are growing more diverse and more sophisticated.

Other nuclear States have declared an end to their production of nuclear materials for weapons - but again in some regions, including this one, the stockpiles are growing. Other nuclear States have proclaimed moratoria on nuclear tests - but other nuclear States,

including in South Asia, have not signed the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. Governments are investing in weapons while cutting their health budgets. I call on India to renew its leadership on nuclear disarmament.

This country made the first call for a comprehensive test ban in 1954. In 1988, India promoted an ambitious plan for a nuclear-weapon-free world. And today, India has a solemn responsibility to help South Asia stop developing nuclear arsenals. This is all the more urgent in our era of rising violent extremism and radicalization. Terrorists are using the Internet, especially social media, to recruit young people, raise funds and spread their narrative of hate. I have repeatedly condemned the terrorism that takes innocent lives.

The world stood in solidarity with India in the aftermath of the devastating and appalling terrorist attacks in Mumbai in 2008. The world was again horrified last month by the savage and cowardly attack on innocent schoolchildren and educators in Peshawar. And yesterday, the world rallied in Paris.

The United Nations has a comprehensive Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy which India fully supports. I welcome India's cooperation with the United Nations on counter-terrorism. And I urge India to work with its neighbours on the Strategy's four pillars: addressing conditions that allow terrorism to spread; preventing and combating it; building States' capacity; and ensuring respect for human rights and the rule of law. Now let me now turn to global security.

India has shown its faith in a collective approach through its generous contributions to UN peacekeeping operations.

Today, more than 8,000 Indian peacekeepers serve in UN operations. I have seen their courage - and I have honoured their sacrifice. One hundred and fifty-eight Indian peacekeepers have lost their lives while serving the UN. We are doing everything possible to protect our blue helmets.

Two out of three - two out of every three peacekeepers serves in conditions of ongoing conflict, where there is either a fragile peace agreement - or none at all. In places like Mali, armed groups are joining forces with transnational criminal networks and terrorist organizations.

To address these threats, protect civilians and safeguard human rights, we need a consistent strategy that is fully supported by the international community and the Security Council.

Our troops need the right equipment, personnel, training and expertise. More than that, they need the backing of countries that can influence warring parties. We are improving peacekeeping - with solid results. We have focused our missions, introduced effective new technologies and broadened our base of contributors.

But there are still major challenges. We need better funding, training and equipment. We need to improve command and control. Our troops and police must carry out challenging mandates with full resolve. We need to handle ever-more-complex mandates. And we need stronger political support overall.

That is why I have established a High-Level Independent Panel to conduct a comprehensive review of peace operations.

One of its members is retired Indian Lieutenant General, Abhijit Guha, who brings years of experience in UN peacekeeping.

The Panel will provide recommendations to help the United Nations - with India - better serve people in need.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me now turn to the second area where India has a key role to play: human rights. Diversity is one of India's most outstanding features. It is home to a mosaic of peoples from different cultures, ethnic groups, religions and languages. In India and all countries, individuals are born free and equal. People deserve respect, dignity and security regardless of their ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation or gender identity. The United Nations defends those rights everywhere - north, south, east and west.

Development models must reach all groups. Inclusive growth brings shared prosperity. India has already lifted hundreds of millions of people out of poverty and it can bring the benefits of inclusive growth to millions more.

Yesterday, I visited Mahatma Gandhi's Sabarmati Ashram in Gujarat. I was deeply moved by how they are conserving and teaching Gandhi's letters and other precious artefacts. And I reflected on our collective responsibility to conserve the spirit of Gandhi's teachings.

He confronted many forms of injustice - including against people who were then called "Untouchables". His struggle led to the historic resolution banning discrimination based on caste. Today India has laws that not only enshrine equality but also take positive steps to address past discrimination. But millions of Dalits, Tribals and others still face discrimination, especially the women and girls. In too many communities, religious minorities also suffer. We must continue Gandhi's battle for equality.

Since as a young diplomat I visited Rajghat many times, whenever VIPs came, I escorted. As Secretary-General and as Foreign Minister I paid my own tribute. I really try to practice, like most, the seven social sins that Gandhi said. If politicians, businessmen or scientists or whatever professions they do, they practice what he said, I think this world will be most harmonious, and there will be no conflict, no corruption.

I just admire, at that time already, he taught us to keep all this. When I went to Sabarmati Gandhi Ashram yesterday again, I was humbled and inspired. Yesterday in my speech I told world leaders, "Let his teachings inspire all of us."

In addressing many difficult challenges, I think education is one of the keys. Schools should be gardens of global citizenship - not battlegrounds of divisive ideologies. The world faces a global pandemic of violence against women, including the heinous crimes of rape and sexual abuse. India has a special challenge. The United Nations will do everything possible to support Government efforts to prevent this violence, protect women, provide for victims and punish the perpetrators.

I started a global campaign called "HeforShe" campaign to change mindsets and mobilize men for gender equality. I thank Prime Minister Modi for his support.

No country can advance as long as its women are held back. I have been saying that while in our world we use lot of different resources, technologies, the least-utilized resource in our human lives is women. More than half the world's population are women. Then it is only natural that if we cannot give more, then at least they should be given equal treatment, equal status. That is why as Secretary-General, I have been promoting gender equality and empowerment. I try to lead by example, so other world leaders and business leaders can emulate the United Nations' example. I am proud to tell you the UN has changed a lot since I became Secretary-General. Lakshmi Puri is now deputy head of UN Women. It was I who established UN Women. There were some fractured departments, offices small or big - I just combined all of them together to establish one big huge department: UN Women. I need the Indian Government's strong support for UN Women. I applaud the many civil society groups across India that work - often without resources or recognition - to empower women and minority groups.

Two years ago, Justice Verma delivered valuable recommendations to end violence against women in India. I count on the Government to act on them. India has long displayed a commitment to gender equality.

The world can thank a daughter of India, Dr. Hansa Mehta, for replacing the phrase in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It said, "All men are born free and equal". Now it is changed, "All human beings are born free and equal", in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. How appropriate, how fitting it is.

I call for India to promote gender tolerance and non-discrimination, where the full participation of women and all minority groups leads to sustainable peace.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

The third area where I see enormous potential in India is sustainable development. When it comes to sustainable development and climate change, I become much more energized than when talking about security issues. Because I see much more possibility and hope in the United Nations contribution to sustainable development.

The world is now shaping a new agenda to succeed the Millennium Development Goals. I count on India to engage fully in this process. I welcome "Make in India" - I thought it was "Made in India", now it is "Make in India"! It is a very good policy of Prime Minister Modi - this national programme to turn this country into a manufacturing hub of the world. I saw the possibilities of this yesterday in Gujarat, at the Vibrant Gujarat summit meeting. It was really vibrating! I think whole world is now vibrating with this dynamism and vibration.

But I would add two words to "Make in India" - "Make it Green in India." What about it? "Make it Green in India!"

By respecting the environment, India can grow economically while enjoying greater human progress overall.

Prime Minister Modi rightly gives priority to creating smart cities - 100 smart cities - and boosting energy security. These are also central to international action on climate change.

Climate action can power growth, reduce poverty, improve health and increase energy security. Renewable energy offers huge business opportunities. I saw this yesterday at the Canal Top Solar Power Plant in Gujarat. Energy efficiency reduces emissions and pollution while increasing productivity.

This year, the world must seize the chance to achieve a meaningful global agreement at the Paris climate conference. That agreement can trigger large investment flows, spark innovation and push low-carbon technologies into global markets. India can be a major part of this new flow of goods and resources.



H.E. Mr. Ban Ki-moon at the Q&A Session.

Ladies and gentlemen, India has shown remarkable global leadership from Gandhi's time until today.

I applaud India for its commitment to the United Nations. India is ranked at the top of our troop-contributing countries, our corporate Global Compact members, our contributors to the UN Democracy Fund - and many other UN initiatives. At the same time,

the challenges here mirror our global challenges: poverty, gender inequality, discrimination, environmental degradation, extremism and other security threats.

The United Nations is mobilizing countries to rise to these challenges in this, our 70th anniversary year. 2015 is a time for global action. If we rise to the moment, we can address suffering that has engulfed our planet for too long. We can reach out to youth, and raise a new generation of global citizens - especially in India, which has the most young people of any country in the world. We can grasp a new future of dignity and security for all.

The great poet Rabindranath Tagore called on people to transcend their differences. He said, "Let us announce to the world that the light of the morning has come - not for entrenching ourselves behind barriers, but for meeting in mutual understanding and trust on the common field of cooperation."

Ladies and gentlemen,

I really count on India to be part of our transformative push to realize this vision - for the people of this remarkable country, India, and our human family of the world.

Thank you for your attention. Thank you. Dhanyavaad.
