

In Oval Office meeting Ban and Obama discuss crises from Syria to climate change

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United Nations **Secretary-General** Ban Ki-moon conferred with President Barack Obama in Washington today on a host of issues ranging from the conflict in Syria and the Israeli-Palestinian peace process to tensions on the Korean peninsula and climate change.

“I am very encouraged that the partnership between the United Nations and the United States is now [building a] very solid foundation and [growing] stronger, and I count on your continuing support on that,” Mr. Ban **told reporters**, with Mr. Obama standing by his side after the Oval Office meeting.

Both leaders praised each other’s efforts to resolve the many problems facing the world. “I think I speak for world leaders in a wide variety of countries when I say that the Secretary-General has shown outstanding leadership,” Mr. Obama told his guest.

“I really appreciate your global leadership to make this world more peaceful, more prosperous, and where all human rights are protected and respected,” Mr. Ban in turn told his host. “The United Nations and United States share common goals – peace and security, human rights and development. In that regard, I really appreciate such strong leadership and cooperation and support of the US Government and President Obama.”

Mr. Ban called on world leaders to take a strengthened leadership role in the Syrian conflict. “I have asked President Obama to demonstrate and exercise his stronger leadership in working together with key partners of the Security Council,” he said.

He noted that over 70,000 people being killed, more than 50 per cent of schools, hospitals and infrastructure has been destroyed, over 6 million people have been internally displaced, and 1.3 million refugees have poured into neighbouring countries since the uprising against President Bashar al-Assad began in March 2011.

He regretted that the Syrian Government had rejected his proposals on arrangements for a UN probe of the alleged use of chemical weapons in Syria, and again appealed urgently to the Government to allow the advance UN team, currently in Cyprus, to deploy to investigate the alleged use of such weapons in Aleppo in March and Homs last December.

Turning to the renewed tensions on the Korean peninsula Mr. Ban called on the authorities of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) to refrain from taking any further provocative measures and rhetoric. "This is not helpful. And I really highly commended President Obama's firm, principled but measured response in close consultation with the Republic of Korea (ROK) Government and with the strong engagement of neighbouring countries like China," he said.

"We hope that all the countries, including China, who may have influence over North Korea, can exercise their leadership and influence so that this situation will be resolved peacefully. First and foremost, the tension level must come down. North Korea should not confront the international community as they are now doing," he added, urging all concerned parties, including the United States, China, the ROK, Russia and Japan, to continue to work together on this matter.

On the Middle East Mr. Ban welcomed President Obama's recent visit to the region. "We need to do all our efforts to fully utilize the momentum generated by President Obama's visit so that the two-State solution can be successfully implemented as soon as possible," he said, referring to the internationally endorsed plan for both Israel and Palestine to live side by side in peace within secure borders.

Turning to climate change, he reiterated his resolve to work very closely with Member States so that a legally-binding global treaty can be achieved by the end of 2015. "For that [to be] possible, to facilitate this process, I intend to convene a leaders' meeting sometime next year," he said. "I have invited President Obama, I invited him to play an important leadership role for humanity."