

At Munich forum, Ban stresses vital link between security and development



Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon

5 February 2011 – Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on Saturday stressed the vital link between security and development, telling a global forum in Germany that recent events in the Middle East highlight the fact that one cannot exist without the other.

“Where there is security – broad-based security – there is peace and development. Where it is absent, there is often chaos and uncertainty,” Mr. Ban said in his address to the Munich Security Conference.

“We see this across a diverse geography of troubled places, most recently in Tunisia, Egypt and other countries of the Middle East,” he added.

“We do not know how these events will end. But this much we do know. They are driven, at bottom, by human insecurity: poverty, diminished or disappointed expectations, the lack of good governance – corruption, ineffective public institutions, a deficit of democracy.

“Insecurity grows with injustice – where human rights and human dignity are not fully respected, and where there are sharp and growing inequalities of wealth.”

At the same time, the Secretary-General noted that the problems and grievances causing unrest in the Arab world represent a microcosm of the broader world.

“Despite progress in many spheres, in many places, insecurity is everywhere on the rise,” he stated, adding that the best guarantee of global security is conflict prevention.

“When you deploy 10,000 soldiers, it costs billions of dollars. If you can prevent conflict, you save resources at a fraction of that cost more importantly, you save lives.”

The United Nations has been placing greater emphasis in recent years on preventive diplomacy efforts. Last year alone, it supported 34 different mediation, facilitation and dialogue efforts, from helping to smooth the way to the first free elections in Guinea since the country's independence, to helping to ease the political crisis in Kyrgyzstan.

Sometimes, Mr. Ban pointed out, a well-run election is the best prevention, especially in societies divided by conflict or undergoing critical

transitions, drawing attention to the fact that there will be at least 20 elections in Africa this year.

“Our message is clear and direct: the will of the people is paramount,” he said. “Meaningful participation in decision-making is among the foundations for social stability and security. Repression and disregard for fundamental rights and freedoms breed crisis and insecurity.”

He added that it is not possible to speak about security without addressing one of the gravest threats, namely the stockpiles of tens of thousands of weapons, and the spectre of their proliferation and nuclear terrorism.

Important strides were made during the past year, he noted, including the signing in April by Russia and the United States of a nuclear arms reduction pact known as the New START Treaty.

Mr. Ban applauded the leaders of both Russia and US for their “visionary leadership and dedicated efforts” in advancing nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, in a separate statement issued by his spokesperson.

“That it should enter into force, here in Munich today, marks a milestone on the road to our ultimate goal of achieving a world free of nuclear weapons,” he told the conference.

Meanwhile, he reiterated a proposal he made last year for the convening of a conference to advance the important goals of the Nuclear Terrorism Convention. He also voiced serious concern about the “unanswered questions” about the nuclear programmes of Iran and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK).

On the margins of the conference, Mr. Ban met with Foreign Minister Kevin Rudd of Australia, during which he expressed his concern and condolences for the recent flooding and cyclone in that country. They also discussed disaster risk reduction, Sudan, Egypt and the Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Global Sustainability, of which Mr. Rudd is a member.

The situation in Egypt was also discussed in separate meetings Mr. Ban had with Foreign Ministers Ahmet Davutoglu of Turkey and Michele Alliot-Marie of France.