

News Release | 21 January 2009 – for immediate release

Kofi Annan calls for greater multilateralism to meet global challenges.

Former UN Secretary-General appeals for urgent reform of the world's multilateral institutions to provide "fair and lasting solutions".

Kofi Annan today warns that the world's most pressing challenges can only be overcome through multilateral solutions. Addressing a ceremony in Oslo to mark the 50th anniversary of the Norwegian Institute for International Affairs (NUPI), the former UN Secretary-General states, "Our futures, our prosperity and security, are wrapped up together more than ever before. No country, no matter how wealthy or powerful, can any longer stand on its own."

In a wide-ranging speech entitled "Multilateralism – Today's Imperative", Kofi Annan states, "Co-operation is no longer a choice but a clear imperative".

Outlining a series of challenges requiring a collective response, Kofi Annan:

- Welcomes the G20's efforts on the financial crisis as the start of a process to involve a far wider range of countries in global decision-making
- Calls for urgent reform of the world's multilateral institutions, including the Security Council, to ensure a greater voice for the developing world
- Warns climate change will affect every country and can only be tackled by all nations acting together

Speaking the day after Barack Obama's "historic inauguration", Kofi Annan stresses the new opportunity the Obama Administration provides. He states, "America will by all accounts re-engage with the international community in a much more positive way and we all hope that President Obama will provide the impetus for re-invigorated multilateralism".

Calling for urgent action in 2009 to address climate change, Kofi Annan states, "The solution to climate change, like the solution to all the global problems we face, must be driven above all by fairness. We need a genuine and universal agreement, starting in Copenhagen later this year, to provide the foundation for a wide-ranging change in behaviour".

Highlighting what can be achieved when a multilateral approach to problem-solving is applied, Kofi Annan describes the resolution of Kenya's political crisis at the beginning of 2008 as "a wonderful example of what is possible when there is political will, unity of purpose and the determination to stay the course in spite of obvious difficulties".

Paying tribute to the work of the Institute during the past 50 years, Kofi Annan says, "NUPI has made a major contribution to our understanding of the challenges the world faces. I wish you many more productive years ahead."

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Notes to Editors

Kofi Annan delivered his speech "Multilateralism - Today's Imperative" at the 50th anniversary conference of the Norwegian Institute for International Affairs at the Grand Hotel in Oslo, Norway.

The Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI) was established by the Norwegian Parliament in 1959. Its aim is to contribute to greater awareness and insight concerning international issues, through research and the dissemination of information. Today's conference marks the beginning of a series of events in 2009 to mark the Institute's 50th anniversary. www.nupi.no