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H.E Mr. Kofi Annan | 4 March 2010 | Jakarta, Indonesia

“The Challenge for Leaders in a Multipolar World” – Address by Mr. Kofi Annan The Istana Negara, Jakarta, Indonesia

Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, it is an honour for me to be with such a distinguished audience.

Let me thank Foreign Minister Marty Natalagewa and Hassan Wirajuda for this opportunity and their welcoming hospitality.

I am very pleased to be back in Indonesia. I find it hard to believe that it is almost five years since my last visit.

I was here at the start of 2005, in the immediate aftermath of the terrible Tsunami, for the UN-ASEAN pledging conference.

And I returned soon after, in less tragic circumstances, for the Asia-Africa Summit which celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Bandung Declaration.

The Declaration was a genuinely historic initiative, bringing together countries to agree a platform to pursue common goals and action.

It is how we show the same vision and leadership in tackling the complex challenges our world faces, that I want to talk about today.

It is leadership, of course, that this region and country are well placed to show.

Perhaps no other area has made such a successful journey from colonialism, conflict and poverty to independence, peace and prosperity as South-East Asia.

Hopefully this success will accelerate and spread more widely through ASEAN's visionary goal of creating an Economic Community by 2015.

Even within ASEAN's record of extraordinary progress, Indonesia's rapid transition to economic powerhouse and stable democratic government is remarkable.

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It has not, I know, been easy. You have had to contend with extremism, internal conflict, social inequality and catastrophic natural disasters.

But the way you have responded to forge national unity and hold free and fair elections is a testament to Indonesia's strength, resilience and capacity to rise to a challenge.

They should give you great confidence for the future.

This progress - in the face of many challenges - explains why Indonesia is seen as a model from which other countries can learn.

This stems not just from what you have achieved, but also for what you are - a regional power, a fast emerging economy, and the world's third biggest democracy.

You have the potential - in the way you meet democratic, development and religious challenges - to be a major influence on other countries watching your progress.

Across the world, there is no doubt that such example and leadership is needed.

The last five years have seen severe global food shortages, soaring energy costs and, of course, the gravest economic crisis for over 60 years.

No continent, no country or community has escaped the fall-out.

We're also confronted by environmental degradation and climate change which threatens to reverse significant progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

Today's multiple crises - of extreme poverty, famine, conflict, disease, natural disasters - all will be made worse by climate change.

Global terrorism, nuclear proliferation, piracy and the collapse of governance in various parts of the world, have brought home the reality of our common vulnerability and the need for collective action.

At the same time, the old certainties of the political and economic order are disappearing.

A system of global governance largely shaped by powerful countries in the North has shifted towards the emerging economies in the South.

All these developments have left countries struggling to adapt.

But they need to catch up fast. The scale and urgency of the challenges demand it.

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It requires a new style of leadership – one that looks beyond narrow national interests and recognizes that durable solutions will only come through multilateral action based on shared values and agreed goals.

This also means improving the quality of governance at international and national levels to ensure the demands of countries and citizens for voice and fair representation are met.

At the national level, leaders should strive for good governance based on a democratic political system, respect for human rights and the rule of law.

And at the global level, governments should ask themselves whether the existing architecture of international institutions is up to the tasks they've set them.

I believe the unprecedented and decisive global response to the economic crisis shows what we have learnt and explains why we have to go further.

It quickly became clear to the leaders of the G8 that they would not be able to contain the damage alone. Instead, the G20 became the forum to shape the response.

This shift, providing a greater voice for emerging economies, demonstrated a welcome and more inclusive approach to tackling the world's problems.

It was a good first step. But on its own, it is not sufficient.

The G20 cannot become yet another exclusive group. I hope that members such as Indonesia, feel a responsibility to use their voice to expand this arrangement and champion the interests of the least developed countries.

We know now that the G20's collective commitments to stimulate, regulate and restructure global economic activity helped to calm nerves and restore confidence.

Recession has not led to global depression. But we are not out of the woods yet.

Crucially, we have not taken the steps needed to ensure that the mistakes and misjudgments that led to this crisis are not repeated.

Also needed are measures to prevent such imbalanced growth and to ensure that the major economies reduce their long-term deficits.

There is a danger, too, that the lessons which should have been learnt from the initial success of the global response are quickly being forgotten.

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While anxiety levels in boardrooms and stock markets may have come down, the daily drama of survival has worsened for many in the world's least developed countries, including much of Africa.

For we risk forgetting the damage that has been caused to countries and communities which played no part in provoking this crisis.

Jobs have gone, incomes and opportunities lost. Tens of millions more people have been added to the already scandalously high number living below the poverty line.

So as well as collective action to prevent any repeat of this crisis, we also have to consider how we are going to step up protection for the most vulnerable on our planet.

Our common values and international solidarity require that we do more to tackle the inequalities in our world, not allow them to widen further.

But worryingly, we are actually seeing wealthier countries use this crisis to wriggle out of their development pledges.

Many African countries, who are not asking for charity but for stronger partnerships, fear their appeals may be rebuffed.

If the G20 is to maintain its effectiveness as the right forum to tackle global economic issues, it must act in the interests of all. And I know I can count on Indonesia to use its membership of the G20 to ensure that the interests of a greater part of the world are considered.

We need to see commitments met to mitigate the social impact of the crisis by ensuring that some of the enormous sums raised for global stimulus plans reach the least developed countries.

Reform of global financial institutions should also be stepped up to give a bigger voice not just to emerging economies but also to other developing countries.

It must be complemented by agreement on a timetable to tackle the unfairness in global economic rules and market distortions which heavily disadvantage developing countries.

We must look again at the conditions so often attached to aid and loans which unnecessarily constrain the policy autonomy of developing countries.

The measures to fix the immediate crisis, and create greater stability in the long term, will unravel if poor countries and poor people are left out or further disadvantaged.

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These same lessons, based on shared values, must also guide us – and urgently – in tackling the crisis of climate change.

And as with the global economic crisis, those countries which have done least to cause global warming are paying the highest price.

Tragically, they are also countries with the least resources to protect their people and adapt to the impact of climate change.

I believe climate change is the greatest challenge of modern times and the key test of leadership.

A nation like Indonesia, with over 17,000 islands, understands all too well the threat that rising sea levels pose to homes, agricultural land and fresh water supplies.

There may now be a widespread consensus on the need for deep cuts in greenhouse gas emissions but the Copenhagen Summit failed to deliver the necessary agreement.

The Summit, sadly, bore all the hallmarks of a missed opportunity.

In particular, leaders were not prepared in advance to take the tough political decisions and agree the radical actions needed to address the climate challenge.

The resulting Accord is weak and does not represent the “agreed outcome” mandated by the Bali Action Plan.

The process to pick up the pieces and rebuild trust between developed and developing countries must begin in earnest now.

The urgency of the task, and the complexity of the negotiating process, demands that all political and regional groupings exercise leadership.

I pay tribute to the role that Indonesia is already playing in moving this process forward.

Climate change must remain a top political priority for all countries.

This means raising their levels of ambition, educating their publics and rebuilding confidence in a multilateral process that delivers an agreement that is universal, effective and fair, with climate justice at its heart.

Fairness entails that the industrialized countries, responsible for the historic build up of emissions, take the lead in cutting emissions dramatically and in supporting mitigation and adaptation in developing countries.

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Regrettably, we are not yet close to finding the \$100 million a year needed to tackle climate change in developing countries, let alone deciding how this money is managed and disbursed.

The big emerging economies, including Indonesia, also have a responsibility to lower their emissions relative to business as usual, and produce verifiable plans for doing so.

We need decisive action as well to accelerate the R.E.D.D initiative to encourage sustainable land use, forest protection and reforestation to reduce emissions.

As a major forested nation, Indonesia can again play a leading role here.

Agreement in Mexico in December will have to reflect the hard-won political compromises of the Copenhagen understanding but also find ways to resolve the remaining issues.

There are many substantive disagreements.

There was no solution to the deeply divisive issue of the future of the Kyoto Protocol, the nature and extent of differential treatment of developed and developing states, and the architecture of a future legal regime.

Finding a way through these disagreements won't be easy. But it is a test of leadership we simply can't afford to fail.

To succeed, political leaders will need to find the courage and vision to set aside special interests and ignore the tyranny of the electoral cycle. They should focus instead on the implications of failure and the appalling burden this will place on future generations.

But leadership cannot be confined to politicians. One of the major lessons I learnt as Secretary-General is that Governments alone can't solve the world's problems. We all need to accept our responsibility.

The business sector must minimize the negative impacts of their operations and invest in clean energy and infrastructure at home and abroad.

Businesses should also ensure that their pursuit of profit does not result in protectionism that prevents developing countries from accessing the knowledge and technology needed to shift to low carbon growth.

There is a responsibility as well on civil society, academia, trade unions, professional associations, local authorities, youth and women's groups.

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They all have a contribution to make in education, in altering behaviour and pressing leaders to take sustained action.

The choice long-term is not between being economically successful and environmentally sound. They are two sides of the same coin.

Indeed the ability to look to the long-term is one of the qualities we need more than ever.

The challenges of our time are many, complex and interconnected.

The global economic crisis demonstrated that they can't be tackled by any one country, no matter how wealthy or powerful, acting alone.

We need to get out of the old mindset that the national security and economic growth of one country need come at the expense of another.

In the modern inter-connected world, power and prosperity are not a zero-sum game.

We all live in the same boat, and nations need not fear the success of another.

It is co-operation as ASEAN is showing, not competition, which will lead to sustainable progress and durable peace.

It is putting our common values of fairness and humanity into action which will heal divisions, spread prosperity and bring stability.

This puts a heavy burden on our leaders. But it also requires all sections of our communities – business, civil society, the media and the public – to call for collective action to find solutions for global challenges.

I remain, however, an optimist even in the face of huge challenges.

But so too does Indonesia. You have showed what can be achieved with courage and commitment.

The old certainties may be disappearing. The new multi-polar world in which we now live may be more fluid and unpredictable.

But if it leads to reformed institutions reflecting modern realities, more voices to help reach the right conclusions and a consensus around shared values and goals, we should be confident.

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Fifty five years ago, the leaders of Africa and Asia met here to take a step along this route.

It is time we made further progress towards their goal. Our world depends upon it.

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