THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

--

REMARKS AT TOWNHALL MEETING
WITH DANISH UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

Copenhagen, 23 October 2013

11:40
Your Excellency, Mr. Christian Friis Bach,
Minister for Development Cooperation,
Dear students,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you, Ms. Christensen, for your introduction.

God eftermiddag, det er vidunderligt at være her i jeres hellige selskab. [GOD EFTERMIDTAG, DET ER VIDUNGERLIGT AT VERA HIER I IERES HUGELLE SELSKAB]
[“Good afternoon – it is wonderful to be in your pleasant company.”]

I am very happy for this chance to meet with you. Thank you for coming together at this historic Royal Library.

This is my second visit to Denmark this year. When I planned my trip, the meeting was more crowded than usual.
I thought that was because Denmark makes such an enormous contribution to the United Nations – in peacekeeping, development and on human rights.

But there was also another reason.

Everyone wanted to talk about the television program – “Borgen” [a popular Danish TV series].

The show is popular not only in Europe and the United States – it has even made it to my own country of South Korea.

I did not see Birgitte Nyborg today [the fictional Danish Prime Minister on the show], but I did have a very productive meeting with Prime Minister Helle Thorning-Schmidt.
I also attended the Global Green Growth Forum. Representatives from around the world are in Copenhagen to help transform our approach to energy. My Sustainable Energy for All initiative aims to promote low-carbon growth.

I had a number of important meetings, but none that I looked forward to more than this chance to speak to you.

As Secretary-General, I have pledged to work with and for young people. So today I do not want to just speak to you; I want to discuss global concerns with you.

You are part of the largest generation of youth in history. You were born into a world of enormous challenges – but you have even more vast opportunities to shape the future.

Experts say 73 million young people are unemployed. And that does not even count many other promising youth who have given up their search for work.

There are no easy answers.

But we can look at this same picture with a new perspective and see potential solutions.

The key is global citizenship – each of you engaging in our world.
Young people can be transformed into employers when we invest in their entrepreneurship.

Our response to the climate challenge can be profitable if we create green technologies that protect our environment while generating growth.

Study after study proves that when women and girls have power, their families, communities and national economies also benefit.

Young people are especially well-placed to leave behind old prejudices and embrace a new understanding of our common humanity.
Technology has already globalized communications. Now we have to globalize three more "C's"—compassion, concern and care for our human family.

The United Nations is doing everything we can to make the most of these trends. We are expanding our networks through social media. We are establishing new partnerships with non-governmental organizations, businesses, faith groups and academics.

We are joining forces with all those who are ready to make a contribution to our collective future.
Last month, leaders from all governments of the world came to our Headquarters in New York. And we also welcomed many advocates, artists, executives and ordinary citizens.

Bill Gates was there to discuss health and development challenges.

We heard from Malala Yousafzai, the young Pakistani student shot by the Taliban, urged the world to put education first.

Stevie Wonder came to speak up for people with disabilities.

And he hosted a huge Global Citizen concert in Central Park.
CEOs from major businesses pledged to advance corporate social responsibility.

Civil society leaders gave voice to vulnerable and marginalized people.

Around the world, people followed the proceedings on social media.

We made a great deal of important progress. The United Nations succeeded in finally making progress on the devastating conflict in Syria. The Security Council broke its deadlock and agreed to take action against chemical weapons.
I am delighted that the Nobel Committee recognized this valuable work by granting the Peace Prize to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

The joint OPCW-UN teams are moving very quickly. I applaud their courageous work. They have visited many sites. They are already carrying out destruction activities.

Stopping chemical warfare is essential. But it is not enough.

We continue to rush life-saving aid to the Syrian people. Humanitarian workers need full access to every person in need.

We are pressing the parties to meet in Geneva for talks on a lasting peace.
We are confronting other urgent situations and working to build longer-term foundations for peace.

I am pressing for disarmament and an end to all weapons of mass destruction.

The United Nations is improving the way we conduct our peacekeeping operations while focusing on preventing conflicts from breaking out.

We are strengthening tools for justice to end the age of impunity and usher in an age of accountability.

We are helping countries meet the Millennium Development Goals, our blueprint for a better future by the year 2015.
And we are shaping a universal vision for development in the longer-term.

The plans are ambitious. We need people to make them real.

We need diplomats and politicians – but we also need artists and activists.

Whatever career you chose, you can make a contribution. You can protect the environment, speak out against human rights abuses and contribute to peace.
Dear friends,

This Royal Library holds many important manuscripts, including the correspondence of Hans Christian Andersen, who is still today loved around the world.

I grew up in a very different time and place from you – but even without the Internet I read his fairy tales.

As you know, Hans Christian Andersen was quite poor as a boy. But perhaps this is why he could write with such passion and understanding.
In the story of the ugly duckling, Andersen writes that when the duckling turns into a swan, he "felt glad at having suffered sorrow and trouble, because it enabled him to enjoy so much better all the pleasure and happiness around him."

I encourage you to look at the harsh realities of our world. Go beyond what is comfortable and familiar. Reach out and help others. When you do you will find a more rewarding life for yourself and help create a better world for all.

Thank you. TaK!