

NOTE TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL
(through Mr. Nambiar)

DPI Weekly Press Review

While it is too early for an in-depth analysis of the coverage of your visit to Somalia, the immediate reporting on your meetings and statements in Mogadishu has been marked by clearly positive tones.

"UN chief visits Somalia for first time since 1993," ran a Reuters headline, capturing the general mood of press reports that tended to highlight your desire to show solidarity with the Somali people and your commitment to help the troubled country, in part by opening a political office. It is interesting to note that news dispatches by a number of major outlets, such as the BBC and AP, did not focus only on the drama of the visit, but also provided rather lengthy and detailed accounts of UN involvement in the country.

Meanwhile, the enclosed Press Review focuses on two major international stories that made headlines over the past week – the Durban meeting on climate change and the Bonn conference on Afghanistan. Your statements at both events garnered considerable media interest.

On the climate change talks, we could discern two main threads in reporting. Some outlets chose to view your remarks as a rather pessimistic assessment of the current state of play and an attempt to downplay expectations of success at the forum. Others, however, tended to highlight what they saw as your desire to push Member States to make any kind of progress at the talks and thus help to propel the negotiations forward. We will follow closely the coverage of the conclusion of the conference and its outcome to spot notable trends, particularly in the context of the upcoming Rio+20 summit.

As for Bonn II, there were mixed reactions in the media to the conference and its decisions that some viewed as positive, while others voiced grave concerns over the country's ability to survive after 2014 without the current level of international support. Although there was relatively limited focus on the UN beyond reporting on your statements, we should note that an article in China Daily stressed that the UN should play "a leading role" in coordinating international assistance to Afghanistan, a perspective shared by an op-ed piece in The Hindu.

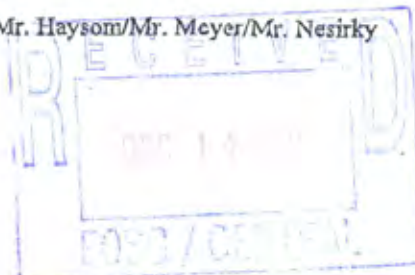
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K. Akasaka

Kiyo Akasaka
9 December 2011

cc: The Deputy Secretary-General/Mr. Pascoe/Mr. Kim/Mr. Orr/Mr. Hayson/Mr. Meyer/Mr. Nesirky



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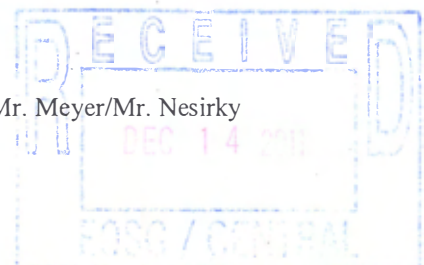
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9 December 2011

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PRESS REVIEW

Friday, 9 December 2011

Produced by News and Media Division, Department of Public Information

CLIMATE CHANGE: DURBAN CONFERENCE

The UN Climate Change Conference in Durban, South Africa, remained a prominent global news item this week with early reporting continuing to portray the summit as being on the brink of failure due to what was widely perceived as an irreparable fracture between developed and developing nations. As the conference neared its conclusion, however, a glimmer of hope shone through with a number of reports highlighting the possibility that delegates would achieve some sort of agreement.

Against that backdrop, the Secretary-General's address to the opening of the high-level segment received wide pick-up, with two main themes emerging from the coverage. Some outlets chose to portray the statement as a downbeat assessment that attempted to lower expectations for the conference. "Ban Ki-moon, UN chief, doubts climate deal," ran an **AP** headline over an article which said the Secretary-General pointed out the "barriers to an agreement on a future negotiating path." A similarly toned article in **The Financial Times** reported that Ban "warned" that a new global climate treaty might be "beyond reach" and said his address contributed to "darkening the mood" at the climate talks. **The Guardian** (UK) described Ban's speech as being the "most downbeat assessment of the talks" and noted that "as a measure of low expectations," the Secretary-General was looking for "just incremental advances." For its part, **The Washington Post's** website ran a video report on Ban's address, noting that he voiced "pessimism" about the prospects of a comprehensive deal on greenhouse gas emissions. And South Africa's **Business Day** said Ban "admitted" that attempts to secure a binding climate deal would be "challenging."

At the same time, another strand of reporting on the Secretary-General's remarks chose to emphasize Ban's push for the Member States to come away from the talks with any agreement possible. For instance, a **UPI** headline proclaimed: "Ban tries to push Durban talks forward." **ABC News' (US)** online environment blog described Ban's speech as being "forceful." **AFP** reported that Ban "urged" the "deadlocked" negotiators to work "urgently" for solutions and said he "begged countries to spare the endangered Kyoto Protocol." On a similar note, the **South African Press Association** said Ban "urged negotiators to keep up the momentum" built up last year at Cancún while Japan's **Asahi Shimbun** said Ban "called for the extension of the Kyoto Protocol." And an **India Blooms News Service** dispatch headlined "Can't accept 'no' as answer in Durban: Ban," said the Secretary-General "stressed the urgency of the moment."

The blame game

In depicting the challenges facing progress at the talks, media outlets pointed to what they saw as deep divisions between industrialized and developing nations and the differences in the two groups' approaches to reducing carbon emissions. For some, the stance adopted by the US was the main reason for the stalemate. An editorial in **China Daily** described the conference as "fruitless" and blamed the US' "foot-dragging" on development aid and its "refusal" to commit to emissions reduction as "the central cause of the impasse." The paper also criticized the overall position adopted by industrialized countries on emissions noting that they were "curtailing developing countries' right to development." Similarly, India's **The Telegraph** argued that agreement in Durban was "more than unlikely" because the US would "not touch a binding agreement with a bargepole." The outlet concluded that the Kyoto Protocol had "failed" and that the "blatant disagreements" spilling over from Copenhagen appeared to

be “endangering” the continuation of the negotiations. And the **Sydney Morning Herald** said that Washington’s “solitary holdout” from Kyoto “cast a pall” over Durban while Germany’s **Süddeutsche Zeitung** noted that the conference marked “a massive shift of power” as the US was “condemned to stand still, while China is showing flexibility.”

On the other hand, many blamed the fissures among key international players – and the multilateral process itself -- for the talks’ problems. **The New York Times** singled out the “dispute” between the US and China as the “enduring feature” of the negotiations and “a source of deep frustration for the other players.” **DPA** reported that tempers had “flared” with the European Union “berating” the United States and China for “blocking the way forward.” For its part, Austria’s **Der Standard** declared that the UN climate process was “failing” as industrialized nations did not want to spend money on the Green Climate Fund. Similarly, the **Sowetan** (South Africa) wrote that the rich countries’ “apparent reluctance” to commit to a climate agreement was of “serious concern” and would transform the conference into “yet another talk-shop with no bite.” And in an interview-based piece featuring Yvo de Boer, the **AP** reported that the former climate change official believed that the negotiations were “failing” because world leaders “failed to become deeply engaged” in efforts to reach an agreement. The interview – picked up by a range of outlets including **The Huffington Post**, Canada’s **Globe and Mail**, South Africa’s **Independent Online** and **The Times of India** – cited De Boer saying that world leaders’ recent “inattention” was compounded by their preoccupation with the economic and Eurozone crises.

Others used the occasion to reiterate their scepticism over the effectiveness and necessity of the UN-led climate process. The **Khaleej Times**, for example, pointed out that increasing environmental awareness is something “every state can do on its own” and that such an approach would “encourage” the private sector to develop technology in line with environmental concerns. Thomas Kerr’s piece in **Live Mint** (India) stated that while “a meaningful and legally binding” new climate agreement seems “unlikely” to emerge, there was nonetheless “some reason to hope that a different sort of initiative could make a difference.” The author noted that despite the UN process, local and national schemes taking “an entrepreneurial approach” to environmental issues were “bearing fruit.” Writing in **De Morgen** (Belgium), Gaston Meskens dismissed the need for a global policy on climate change altogether, instead calling for “a global protocol for energy, water, food, and transport.” And **Deutschlandfunk** (Germany) said that the EU should first increase its own goal of reducing the emission of greenhouse gases from 20 to 30 percent, “irrespective of what the other countries do.” Only then, the article asserted, could the group “in a credible way call upon other countries to do more.”

Durban: total failure or partial success?

Despite the pessimistic overtones in global coverage, some voiced support for the UN climate process. In Australia, **The Age** said that the difficulties in overcoming the obstacles to concerted action were “not cause for despair” but a reason for “continuing to make the case for what must be done” on a global scale. On a similar note, **The Guardian** (UK) voiced support for the negotiations, arguing that world leaders’ “obsession” with current economic problems was “woefully misplaced,” and that the financial crisis was “dwarfed by the risks we are taking with our entire planet.” In a **Daily News Egypt** op-ed, Julian Hunt emphasized that the UN process on climate change was “important” and encouraged “action on the ground” to reduce emissions.

Others pointed out that even though the talks had not achieved all that was expected, they were not entirely unsuccessful. An editorial in the **Financial Times**, for example, said that voluntary commitments akin to those made in Cancún were “the best that can be expected” in Durban. Yang Fuqiang’s piece in **China Daily** suggested that a non-legally binding document would be signed at Durban “while leaving all the key issues pending to the next meeting.”

As the week progressed, however, global outlets appeared to hint that a possible agreement was in the works. **Reuters** reported that the US “denied” it was trying to delay a new global climate treaty and said it “supported an EU proposal that aims to chart a path to a more ambitious pact to fight climate change.” **AFP** said delegates saw “encouraging progress” on the architecture of the Green Climate Fund while **La Libre Belgique** cited US delegate Todd Stern claiming that Durban negotiators were “about to reach an agreement” on the definition of the Fund. For its part, Japan’s **Daily Yomiuri** said the extension of the Kyoto Protocol was becoming “more likely” in spite of strong opposition from Japan. South Africa’s **The Times** said that developments in the negotiations signalled that the deadlock over the Kyoto Protocol and the Green Climate Fund “might break before COP17 wraps up in Durban at the end of the week.” And **The Independent** (UK) pointed out that while progress at the conference was looking “perilously uncertain,” there was nonetheless “still at least the possibility of a constructive outcome.”

AFGHANISTAN

The Bonn II Conference drew mixed reaction from the media amid growing concerns over Afghanistan’s current situation and apprehensions about the nation’s fate in the context of NATO’s drawdown in 2014. While some expressed optimism about the West’s continuing support for Kabul, others worried about the implications of the region’s thorny politics on Afghanistan’s future.

Meanwhile, some spoke about the need for the UN to take the peace-building reins in the country. **China Daily** said that despite the agreement at Bonn II, “uncertainties abound” regarding the international community’s ability to deliver on their promises. The paper called on the UN to play “a leading role in coordinating international assistance to Afghanistan.” This perspective was shared by Chinmaya R. Gharekhan and Karl F. Inderfurth in their jointly authored piece for **The Hindu** (India). The authors suggested that the UN should play “a crucial role” in ensuring “the non-interference by foreign countries in Afghanistan’s affairs.”

The Secretary-General’s participation in the forum prompted considerable interest from an array of outlets, including Italy’s **ANSA**, **Der Standard** (Austria), and **Tokyo Shimbun**. Echoing a common theme, a **Press Trust of India** dispatch ran under the headline “Afghan peace process must be inclusive: Ban.” Noting that Ban had “expressed concern” over the Afghan security situation in a meeting with the country’s president, Hamid Karzai, the story said that Ban had “stressed the unity of the international community in supporting the country for the long term.” Similarly, Pakistan’s **Dawn** said Ban “vowed” to stand by Afghanistan as it sought to establish security and stability. And **Le Monde** (France) quoted Ban’s point that the UN would “continue to support Afghanistan” while **DPA** said he “warned” that protecting civilians remained “a key priority.”

The Secretary-General’s stance on the absence of Pakistan from the conference also garnered some coverage with the **AFP**, among others, reporting that he “lamented” the country’s decision to boycott. In the Pakistani press, however, some viewed the statement through a critical lens. Writing for **The Nation**, for instance, S.M. Hali asserted that it was a “slap on Pakistan’s face” for it treated Pakistan as though its presence were “immaterial.” The author also pointed out that Ban confirmed that despite the boycott, the Pakistani authorities had already given their consent to abide by any decisions taken at the conference.

Reporting on the Secretary-General’s response to the terrorist attacks on Tuesday an array of outlets headlined the UN leader’s strong reaction to the event. “UN chief condemns terror attacks in Afghanistan,” proclaimed the **Press Trust of India**. “UN slams Afghan Ashura bomb blasts,” chimed in **Press TV** (Iran). For its part, **Prensa Latina** reported that the Secretary-General “rejected” the attacks “in the most energetic terms” and conveyed his condolences to the relatives of the victims. Overall,

coming on the heels of the Bonn conference, the attacks led some to wonder whether Afghanistan was on the brink of an unprecedented outburst of sectarian violence.

Bonn decisions: support mixed with doubt

The decisions reached in Bonn garnered support from those who argued that prolonged Western financial support for Afghanistan would be necessary in order to keep the country's peace intact. **The Economist** (UK), for instance, said that while some would argue that continuing financial support for Kabul was "a bad idea at a time when Western countries are short of cash," the magazine pointed out that the pledged amounts would only be a fraction of the current expenditures. Furthermore, the weekly said that by having invaded the country, the world had "a duty towards the people of Afghanistan." Germany's **Süddeutsche Zeitung** found that Bonn II "sounded a promise" that Afghanistan could be "better rather than worse off" after troop withdrawals. But the paper underlined that "without a negotiated peace and a lot more Western money, the Bonn decisions have no value." On a similar note, **The Times of India** called on the international community to adopt India's proposal for an Afghan Marshall Plan, arguing that "moral, material, and security support must endure well after 2014." And Pakistan's **Daily Times** said it was "pertinent" that the world community "stays the course" and "stops Pakistan from pursuing its strategic depth policy" in order to prevent Afghanistan from descending into civil war.

There were those, however, who questioned the viability of such a plan, arguing that Afghanistan was too weak to stand without the continuing presence of NATO troops. Typically, Finland's **Helsingin Sanomat** voiced concern that an end to the NATO operation in the country would create "a power vacuum in the most volatile area in the world" and disagreed with the conference's conclusions saying that "there can be no deadline to the international operation in Afghanistan." Similarly pessimistic, **Die Presse** (Austria) compared NATO's impending withdrawal to the Soviet Union's saying that it was the West's "turn to fail" in the country and that "dreams of establishing a democracy have long been gone."

At the same time, there was widespread concern that Pakistan's boycott spelled out Bonn II's impending failure. "Afghan peace effort hits a wall," read a headline over a **Wall Street Journal** news story which said that the talks highlighted the "failure to get Pakistani help in stabilizing the country." Similarly, Canada's **Globe & Mail** said the "smell of fiasco" had permeated the lead-up to Bonn II in the absence of "any delegate with even the slightest influence over the insurgency" – particularly, the Taliban and Pakistan. For its part, **De Morgen** argued that the conference took place in "a negative atmosphere" due to the absence of Afghanistan's "most important neighbouring country." The paper cited an unnamed expert who argued that Pakistani nonattendance was "a recipe for the failure" of the Bonn conference. **The Nation** (Pakistan) similarly suggested that the absence of Pakistani and Taliban players from the conference "does not bode well" for the future of Afghan peace. And **Gulf News** (UAE) called on the US to do "whatever is necessary" for Pakistan to be brought back into the peace process, saying there could be "no settlement" without Pakistani support. On the other hand, **Pakistan Today** bemoaned the boycott, saying Islamabad had "lost a valuable opportunity" to explain the ground realities to the world and to reaffirm its stance on the war on terror.

Bombings set off alarms

Tuesday's terrorist attacks triggered another round of pessimistic assessments by those who viewed the bombings as a prelude to a sectarian conflict with wider regional implications. "Sectarian violence adds to woes," headlined an editorial in **The Australian**, which called on Afghan and coalition forces to thwart any further sectarian attacks before they become "endemic and add another dangerous dimension to a deeply conflicted scenario." BBC Afghan editor Waheed Massoud argued that the bombings were "a new and brutal precedent" and that Afghans of all faiths were hoping that it would not open up "yet another front in the country's bloody conflict." On that note, **The Daily Telegraph's** chief foreign

correspondent David Blair drew comparisons between the Afghan attacks and those which ravaged Iraq, suggesting that there were “obvious parallels with that deliberate bid to ignite a sectarian civil war.” **AFP** similarly compared the attacks to the “violence experienced in Iraq and Pakistan.” Meanwhile, **NRC Handelsblad** (Netherlands) said the attacks signified that the war in Afghanistan was getting “more and more difficult to curb.” The paper wondered if the new trend in sectarian violence meant the country would once again become “a failed state which will affect the rest of the world.” And C. Raja Mohan’s op-ed in the **Indian Express** warned that New Delhi “should brace itself for anarchy and civil war” across Afghanistan as the 2014 withdrawal approaches.

In a parallel thread, some suggested that the sectarian bloodshed was simply the product of regional players interfering in the Afghan power-play. For instance, writing in **The Independent**, Adrian Hamilton said that if there were to be a descent into sectarian warfare, “it will be the result of foreign intervention, not home-grown tensions” and that it seemed “far more likely” that the attacks were “planned in Pakistan by those whose interests it is to promote a collapse of civil order.” India’s **Deccan Herald** said the bombings added “a complicating new dimension” to the situation in the country, noting that it was “in danger of going the Pakistan way” and warning of “the danger of Iran fuelling Shia extremism.” And commenting in the **Asia Times Online** (China), M. K. Bhadrakumar pointed out that while Pakistan would be “a great loser” if sectarian strife broke out, US interests would instead be “very well served” for Western troops would become “the only really credible provider of security.”
