

25 October 2010



Secretary-General

SG/T/2752

Department of Public Information • News and Media Division • New York

SECRETARY-GENERAL'S ACTIVITIES IN FRANCE, 18-20 OCTOBER

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, accompanied by Madam Ban Soon-taek, arrived in Strasbourg, France, on Monday evening, 18 October.

That night, the Secretary-General of the Council of Europe, Thorbjørn Jagland, held a dinner in honour of the Secretary-General and Madam Ban.

The next day, the Secretary-General met again with Mr. Jagland for a bilateral meeting. They **discussed** the cooperation between the United Nations and the Council of Europe, particularly on issues relating to refugees and migrant workers. They also discussed the cooperation between the United Nations and the Council of Europe on regional issues such as Kosovo, Cyprus and Georgia.

During their discussion, the Secretary-General noted the Council's work in promoting respect for the rights of the members of the Roma communities and shared his concern over their situation. The Secretary-General and Mr. Jagland talked about combating violence against women, and the Secretary-General stressed the United Nations commitment to taking strong measures against such violence. They also discussed ways to enhance women's empowerment through the institutional set-up of UN Women.

The Secretary-General then addressed the Council of Europe, on the occasion of the sixtieth anniversary of the European Convention on Human Rights. He said that one of the cardinal missions of the United Nations is to shine the light of human rights everywhere, including the darkest corners of the world. He warned that in some developed nations, immigration and economic recession have combined to create anxieties which could gradually serve as a pretext for the politics of discrimination and exclusion. "Let this be the moment when Governments reaffirm their commitment to the highest human rights standards for all," he added. (See Press Release [SG/SM/13189](#))

Speaking to reporters afterwards in a joint **press conference** with Mr. Jagland, the Secretary-General said the Council of Europe had played an important role in safeguarding human rights in the region. He also stressed the importance of defending human rights defenders, civil society leaders and colleagues in the media, who are often in the forefront of exposing human rights abuses.

The Secretary-General then met with Jerzy Buzek, President of the European Parliament. They discussed climate change and the forthcoming conference in Cancun, Mexico, in December. They also discussed the Millennium Development Goals, and the Secretary-General expressed his appreciation of the European Union's invaluable support to the United Nations agenda through financial support and many other means. The Secretary-General noted the good cooperation in many areas between the European Union, and the European Parliament in particular, and the United Nations. The Secretary-General and Mr. Buzek also **talked** about the situation in Sudan, Cyprus, Iran and the Middle East.

Following that meeting, the Secretary-General addressed the European Parliament. He said that these were testing times, even in a prosperous Europe. He noted that a dangerous trend was emerging: a new politics of polarization. The Secretary-General added that Europe could not

afford stereotyping that closes minds and breeds hatred, and that the world could not afford a Europe that does this. (See Press Release [SG/SM/13190](#))

In a joint [press conference](#) with the President of the European Parliament, the Secretary-General said that the European Union and the United Nations were natural allies in addressing several issues at the global and regional levels. "We are working together to advance peace and security, human rights, development," he added. He also urged Europeans not to give in to the "siren songs of suspicion — populists who are trying to find someone to blame for economic hard times."

After attending an official lunch hosted by Mr. Buzek in his honour, the Secretary-General visited Strasbourg City Hall and met with the city's Senator-Mayor, Roland Ries. (See Press Release [SG/SM/13191](#))

The Secretary-General then participated in an extraordinary meeting of the European Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee.

That night, the Secretary-General attended a dinner in his honour hosted by the President of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso.

The next day, Wednesday, 20 October, the Secretary-General met with Catherine Ashton, the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy of the European Union. They [discussed](#) the importance of the cooperation between the United Nations and the European Union in a broad range of areas, in particular the situation in the Middle East and the situation in Lebanon. On the Middle East, they discussed the status of the direct talks. The Secretary-General emphasized the importance of sustaining the direct talks, and reaffirmed the readiness of the Quartet partners to support them.

The Secretary-General and Ms. Ashton also talked about the situation in Sudan. They discussed recent developments in the preparation of the referenda, which stands at a critical juncture, and agreed on the need for the United Nations-led mechanism to coordinate monitoring. They also talked about Somalia, Iran, Pakistan and Kosovo. On the latter, the preparations for the European Union-led Belgrade-Pristina dialogue, as well as the United Nations support for the process were discussed.

After visiting the city's cathedral, the Secretary-General left Strasbourg to return to New York.

* * * * *

[For information media • not an official record](#)