



THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

25 June 2012

Dear Sixth Grade students, *Dear all,*

Thank you very much for your letter, especially for asking such good questions about the United Nations. Let me try to answer them.

It is hard to say what has been the most fun in my job, since I tend to spend my days addressing hunger, disease, conflict and environmental degradation. But what has been most gratifying is bringing people together to address these problems. The United Nations has negotiated hundreds of treaties covering a great spectrum of human activity, but I myself have been more involved in pressing for steps that will turn words into action when it comes to those treaties, especially on key global challenges like climate change and the control of nuclear weapons.

I do travel quite a bit – usually every month – and have visited dozens of United Nations Member States on all continents; it is an eye-opening experience and I heartily recommend that you take advantage of any opportunities you might have to sightsee, study or work abroad. I regret to say I do not have much time to take a break, but when I do have free time I enjoy spending it with family or playing soccer with colleagues and friends. And finally, yes, I do have a lot of paperwork; resolutions and reports are part of what makes the United Nations function, but we are also trying to reduce bureaucracy, use email more often, and reduce our environmental footprint. Above all, we focus on people, not papers!

I was especially touched that you referred to my visit with Mrs. Patterson in May. She is someone who left a lasting impression on me at a young age, and we have been in touch ever since – for more than half a century.

The Sixth Grade Class
Good Shepherd Lutheran School
Novato
California

Please accept my best wishes for your success as you enter seventh grade in September. Make the most of your summer before you come back to school to start the next chapter of your important lives!

Wishing you all the best! Yours sincerely,

Ban Ki-moon
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