

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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MESSAGE TO THE UNITED NATIONS ASSOCIATION OF THE UNITED KINGDOM

“UN Forum”, London, 12 June 2010

Lord Hannay,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to greet all the participants in this wonderful gathering of concerned citizens and friends of the United Nations.

Change does not come from the top down; it comes from the bottom up; it does not begin only in government buildings, it emanates from communities. That’s where you are – on the frontlines, in the vanguard, where need, vision and innovation combine to light a spark. With little fanfare but great dedication, the UN Association of the United Kingdom and its kindred groups across the world carry forth the core values of the United Nations: justice, human rights, equal opportunity. You influence decision-makers and engage the young. I am most grateful for your commitment and I welcome the efforts of this UN Forum to bring our mission to new audiences and constituencies. Your people’s movement is helping us to build a better world.

If ever there was a moment to come together and act as one, it is now. We face climate change, unprecedented levels of hunger, extremism, intolerance, fragile states and the continuing fallout of the greatest economic upheaval in generations.

Yet we often lose sight of the vast new possibilities for common progress that exist in an interconnected world and even within some of these very same crises.

Yes, many countries are not on track to meet the Millennium Development Goals, but we are falling short not because the goals are too ambitious or for lack of time, but because we have not scaled up what works or fulfilled our financial promises to the world’s poor and vulnerable.

Yes, climate change risks catastrophe if present trends continue, but we have not yet fully embraced the path of green growth and clean energy.

Yes, we continue to live under the shadow of nuclear weapons, but thanks to Government leaders and mobilization by the grass roots, there is wind in the sails of our campaign to rid the world of the nuclear threat.

Maternal health has been one of the slowest-moving of the MDGs, but thanks to the hard work of activists and leaders around the world, this is about to change.

And yes, even as we continue to witness appalling violation of human rights, international criminal justice has taken remarkable strides, and the International Criminal Court is helping us move from an era of impunity to an age of accountability, with even heads of state called to account for genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

I seek not to downplay the challenges we face, but only to focus our minds and energies on turning threat to opportunity. Let us take advantage of the momentum that you yourselves have helped to build. There is so much that we can do together. Thank you again for your commitment and hard work, and please accept my best wishes for a successful forum.