

Secretary-General's remarks at press encounter with U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry

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SG: Thank you, Secretary Kerry, ladies and gentlemen. Let me begin by thanking Secretary of State Kerry for welcoming me to the State Department. The Secretary of State is a long standing friend of the United Nations, and I am especially glad to visit him at this early stage of his tenure. Secretary Kerry, my heartfelt congratulations again on your appointment [as] Secretary of State of the United States. We have been working very closely on many regional political security issues and also global issues including climate change. I know that you will fill this important role – your role – with great knowledge and vision and passion that have been the hallmarks of your career.

I have come to Washington at this time as part of my ongoing reach-out to the American Government and people. We need the strong United States leadership in addressing many regional and global challenges. I had yesterday productive discussions with members of both Senate and House of Representatives. Secretary of State Kerry and I have many issues to discuss today and in the future.

Let me just state out a few issues of most concern. First is Syria. As Secretary of State Kerry has just mentioned, the tragedy continues to deepen without any prospect of political resolution. Nearly 70,000 people have already been killed. UN agencies are mobilizing humanitarian assistance for growing numbers of refugees and displaced people both inside and outside of Syria – and also both government controlled-areas and also opposition-forces-controlled areas. Joint Special Representative Lakhdar Brahimi and I are calling the Security Council to be united and speak and act in one voice. And we support the initiative by Moaz al-Khatib, head of Syrian National Coalition for dialogue with Syrian authorities. This is an opportunity we should not miss.

In Mali, regional and international actors have supported the French and Malian military action. I appreciate the United States Government's strong support in this operation and their continuing commitment for peace and stability in Mali. The United Nations is working closely with the key partners, including the African Union and ECOWAS towards a peaceful solution that restores constitutional order, addresses genuine grievances, promotes reconciliation, and ensures the country's territorial integrity.

With respect to the nuclear test conducted by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, DRPK, this was a direct challenge to the international community. I have repeatedly called on the leadership of Pyongyang to give up its pursuit of nuclear programmes and to instead focus on building a better future for the country's people by addressing dire

humanitarian and human rights situations. I encourage the Security Council to act with unity and to take appropriate measures as soon as possible. I count on Secretary of State's strong leadership as was stated just now.

On the Iranian nuclear issue, I sincerely hope that the P5+1 meetings in Kazakhstan later next month will bring fruitful progress.

On the Middle East, I welcome the plans of President Obama and Secretary of State Kerry's visit to the region. I know that the Secretary of State has travelled extensively in the past, has good relationships with many leaders in the region, and knows the importance of the issue. We all need to make special efforts to forge a two-state solution before the window of opportunity closes. It is important that the right of Israel to exist should be respected and also the viable Palestinian authorities, in terms of political and financial situation, be supported so that both can live side by side in peace and security. That is a two-state solution.

In addition to these and other crises, the United Nations is striving to defeat poverty and advance sustainable development. I have been very encouraged by President Obama's call to action on climate change both at his Inauguration and in the State of the Union Address. This is a global imperative.

I also welcome President Obama's intention to pursue reductions in nuclear arsenals. In both these global issues, Secretary of State is committed more than anybody else, and I'm very much encouraged to work with you to achieve a legally binding treaty by 2015.

U.S. leadership will remain crucial in the period ahead. At a time when families and government everywhere are feeling severe financial strains, the benefits of working with the United Nations are clear: burden-sharing, wise use of the global taxpayers' money, and international solutions in the national interest. I look forward to strengthening the U.S.-UN partnership and working closely with Secretary of State Kerry towards our shared goals of peace, development, and human rights.

And Ladies and Gentlemen, and Secretary Kerry, finally let me note that today, Valentine's Day, is also V-Day, when people around the world are speaking out about violence against women as part of the One Billion Rising campaign. On this special day, I urge all governments to send us a Valentine message, a concrete commitment of action to end violence against women and girls around the world. I know that Secretary Kerry and the United States will continue to stand with us in this course. I thank you very much.