

# DANILO TÜRK: VISION STATEMENT

## People First

My vision for the United Nations begins with the world's peoples - and the duty of the Organization to address their needs fairly and effectively. Obviously, this is not a new idea. It is enshrined in the preamble of the UN Charter whose powerful words have inspired generations of champions of multilateralism, both official and non-official. So it is on this premise that the vision of the Secretary-General must build. The UN needs a strong moral commitment to its original purposes and objectives in its effort to reduce and eliminate extreme poverty, to ensure sustainability of economic and social development, to strengthen human dignity and rights and to prevent violent conflicts.

## Three vital partnerships

The Secretary-General cannot be only an advocate for the world's people, but must develop partnerships to achieve real results. Three considerations are fundamental:

**First**, the UN and its Secretary-General operate in a world whose peoples are organized in sovereign states and are represented by their governments. Sovereignty of states and the rule of international law are the cornerstones of the world order and an indispensable condition of peaceful international cooperation. Moreover, the sovereign equality of Member States is the very basis of the United Nations. It is true that international law, the international standards of human rights and the processes of globalization are constantly modifying state sovereignty. However, its fundamental importance remains. Sovereignty increasingly means responsibility and is essential for the further evolution of the rule-based international system.

The Secretary-General must be prepared and able to work with all Member States on all sides of thorny issues, to facilitate constructive solutions that will make a genuine difference for the people. As history has shown, this is a daunting task. The Secretary-General must build connections and trust among Member States of the UN as well as between them and the Organization. Ultimately, the success of the UN depends on its Member States.

**Second**, the evolution of international cooperation since the creation of the UN has given rise to numerous regional organizations which, over time, have become an integral feature of the international system and vitally important partners of the UN. The Secretary-General must coordinate closely with these entities to develop strong partnerships. For example, working closely with African Union deserves special attention, in particular in the field of peace-keeping.

**Third**, in the world of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the Secretary-General must be able to relate effectively with protagonists that present opportunities and challenges beyond the realm of governments. The vision of the Secretary-General must encompass the legitimate expectations of civil society, the private sector and academia that play key roles in this age of global communications and global economic interdependence and should be involved in the realization of the global vision of the UN.

Traditional multilateral diplomacy is more horizontally structured, with increasing cooperation with non-governmental actors.

The Secretary-General must develop these three vital partnerships to mutually reinforce the contributions of all partners, thus adding to greater coherence of policy and action, in particular in the three key areas of the UN's work.

### **Three key areas of work**

**Maintenance of international peace and security** is a fundamental activity of the UN. Over the years the Organization has developed a broad range of instruments to fulfill its basic mission to implement collective, global security. However, the changing nature and growing complexity of armed conflicts that include a growing variety of “non-state actors” (often a deceptively benevolent term) represents a major challenge to the UN. Some of them are parties in the armed conflicts, and eventually might come to the negotiating table, others not. But ideologically driven violent extremists or ruthless terrorists must be combated by states, within the legal and policy framework defined by the UN Security Council.

Clearly, in the turmoil prevailing today, threats must be anticipated and where possible averted by decisive collective action, including by addressing the root causes of conflict. An ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure. The highest priority must be accorded to all forms of preventive diplomacy. The Secretary-General must take initiatives to help governments to confront emerging threats to international peace and security and must use all avenues for good offices and fact-finding in a wise and timely manner. Social cohesion and sustainability of peace must be the ultimate objectives of post conflict peace building lest situations of fragile peace relapse into wars. Accountability for crimes against humanity, war crimes and other atrocities has to be real. The issues affecting minorities must be understood and addressed. Inclusive government in shared and resilient societies must be a fundamental element in our vision.

The capabilities and performance of peacekeeping, a key instrument of the UN, as well as of the special political missions, must be constantly strengthened and operationally improved, for which clear and achievable mandates must be set by the Security Council. Protection of civilians must be of highest priority. The shameful incidents of sexual exploitation and abuse committed by peacekeepers must be prevented - and punished.

The Secretary-General must facilitate all practical activities in this domain. At the same time, Member States and the UN's principal organs, particularly the Security Council, should improve coherence in their decisions and actions. A global security understanding involving all states is imperative and proposals could be presented by the Secretary-General. In the context of the perilous trends affecting international peace and security today, it is urgent to intensify efforts by the UN and its Member States to develop greater understanding among different cultures and acceptance of their diversity, which would be one of my priorities.

**Sustainable development** is a critical part of this vision. The adoption of Agenda 2030, including its Sustainable Development Goals, and the recent Paris Agreement under UNFCCC, are significantly encouraging achievements. Together, they represent a major step towards eradication of poverty, leaving no one behind and putting our planet on a more prosperous, resilient and sustainable path. The Secretary-General should play a catalytic role in the process of implementation of these agreements with the involvement of civil society, the private sector and academia.

Ultimately, the fate of our planet depends on the sustainability of development pursued by human beings. Resources, especially water in arid or overpopulated areas, must be used wisely and for all. Societies with equitable benefits for all peoples and the opportunity for decent work must be an indispensable element of our vision. Conditions must be created at the international level that will allow equity and fairness within societies to progress. Official development assistance, domestic resource mobilization, effective and innovative financing of development, as well as multi-stakeholder partnerships have to be strengthened, as envisaged in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. Here too, the Secretary-General should play an effective catalytic role.

Development is also an efficacious strategy for prevention of armed conflicts and their humanitarian consequences, a vision already enshrined in the UN Charter. The Secretary-General should facilitate a more effective realization of this vision, in which the commitment to put people first will be fundamental.

**Human rights and humanitarian work** are at the center of UN's moral purpose. Critical humanitarian activities must be assigned a high priority in an effort to address the dramatic humanitarian and migration problems that have arisen. The readiness of donors to increase their contributions to the humanitarian funds is highly appreciated. In addition, innovative solutions must be designed urgently. However, the fundamental tasks in the field of economic and social development must not suffer and the levels of the official development assistance should not be reduced. It will be necessary to ensure coherence of humanitarian activities and development aiming at the strengthened resilience of Member States and their societal cohesion. Commitment to place people first will be an indispensable asset in this regard and this will require a high priority for human rights.

Human rights and peoples' rights manifestly are intertwined and universal, so must be respected and protected. For the UN, all human rights, civil and political, as well as economic, social and cultural rights and the right to development must always be up front. Respect and implementation of human rights are primarily a responsibility of states, and priorities vary, but it is possible to respect both human rights and state sovereignty by judicious multilateral cooperation. Therefore, UN organs in the field of human rights must be strengthened and human rights activities further mainstreamed into all major aspects of the UN work.

Manifestly, women's rights in particular are central to achieving any part of this entire vision. Women can and will play a strongly positive role in all fields. The Secretary-General must be committed to the strengthening of their roles and responsibilities - in all UN policies and programs as well as at all levels of UN decision-making.

The UN must always focus strongly on its long term mission to ensure better lives for succeeding generations. Our vision must be one where children are safe, well fed, healthy and provided adequate education.

The Organization must do more to help the young in their legitimate quest for employment and for opportunities to live productive lives in a fast changing world.

## **Management and reform**

As head of the Secretariat, the vision of any Secretary-General must include a clear and strong commitment to be a skillful and effective chief administrative officer of the Organization and a prudent steward of its resources. This means constantly seeking ways to do more with less while being at the same time a responsible and loyal employer to our staff.

The UN staff are the most valuable asset of the Organization. Their commitment to the truly international character of their responsibilities, as required by Article 100 of the UN Charter must be constantly upheld. They must be given resources necessary to perform their duties and also a clear commitment by the Organization to assure their safety and security in field missions. In return, they must understand that zero tolerance for abuses and fraud actually means zero.

The UN staff serves all the people of the world. The composition of the UN Secretariat must therefore reflect the world. Importantly, steadily greater gender balance must be a leading and sustained priority. Correspondingly, staff members must perform in accordance with the highest standards of integrity, impartiality, efficiency and competence and, above all, with the full awareness that they serve all the peoples of the United Nations.

Regrettably, the UN is at a point where, far too often, operational deficiencies and “silo mentalities” seem to dominate and where the written proclamation is distant from requirements of effective action. Accordingly, operational improvements in our rapidly changing world are essential.

We can deliver on all the priorities by introducing reforms formulated with determination and patience, through innovation, adaptation and structural change. We need willingness to walk the long and difficult paths of negotiated settlements and demanding processes of reform, avoiding rigid adherence to those past practices that have proven futile. Every reform is a process, not an event and must be devised carefully, with good understanding of its effects on the system as a whole. The transformational nature of future reforms must necessarily take place in the context of political realities. Building on the efforts of my predecessors, and in coordination with the General Assembly, I would assign high priority to streamlining the bureaucratic processes that have become an obstacle to efficient management.

In conclusion, if appointed by the General Assembly, I shall employ all my past experience - as a democratically elected Head of State, as Permanent Representative to the UN with experience of serving on the Security Council, as a high official of the United Nations, and as a professor of international law - to live up to the trust that would have been placed on my abilities. I would work incessantly and vigorously to achieve my vision of placing people first in the work of the United Nations.

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