

Secretary-General's Special Address to the World Economic Forum Davos Switzerland 2
4 January 2013

It is a pleasure to be in Davos and here with all of you. I welcome the opportunity to speak in this special forum. I want to use our time together to highlight two immediate crises facing the international community and the United Nations: the dire situations in Syria and the Sahel. These are times of tremendous turmoil and change.(...)

I call this period the Great Transition. The old order is breaking down; new arrangements are taking shape.(...)

And finally, the Great Transition is deeply political. People are demanding accountability, human rights, an end to corruption and misrule – and they are doing so with a force that has taken the world by storm and by surprise.(...)

The winds of the Arab Spring have swept away some repressive rulers but left many questions swirling in the air.

We are not passive in the face of these trends and events. With wisdom, foresight and a greater sense of collective responsibility, we can build a better future for all.(...)

I would like to use this platform today to issue a call to action on two immediate crises: the death spiral in Syria, and the widening turbulence in Mali and the Sahel. Let me take them each in turn.(...)

Yet the political environment remains polarized within Syria and across the region. A deadly military momentum prevails inside Syria, and among those States that are helping to fuel the conflict by sending weapons to one side or the other. I call again for such arms flows to stop.

The conflict in Syria is driven by a profound political crisis. It must be resolved by political means that bring real change, a clear break from the past, and fulfil the legitimate democratic aspirations of the Syrian people.

Unfortunately, the Syrians are still not able to sit at the table to work out the practical details of a transition plan that protects Syria's citizens and preserves the vital institutions of a state. They are failing to recognize each other, let alone speak to each other, while their country is in flames.(...)

It will be essential for the Security Council to overcome the deadlock, and find the unity that will make meaningful action possible.

The alternative -- letting the sides fight it out, resigning ourselves to Syria's destruction with all its regional implications -- is too costly and unacceptable. **That would be an abdication of our collective responsibility to protect.**

The world, and above all the Security Council, must uphold its responsibilities.

The situation on the ground is already catastrophic and continues to deteriorate. More than 4 million people are in need of assistance – a fifth of the country's population. Nearly 700,000 people have fled the country. Winter and the deepening violence and political stalemate make it likely that these numbers will grow. I commend Syria's neighbours for hosting these refugees. I urge them to continue to allow those seeking refuge to cross borders to safety, and I urge the international community to support the host countries to avoid unnecessary strain on local communities.(...)

We continue to see unrelenting human rights violations. I am profoundly concerned about the crimes that have been committed -- and about those that could still take place if already high sectarian tensions explode into mass reprisals and killings that irreversibly damage the intricate mosaic of communities that all Syrians have been long proud of. We must do everything we can to guard against this. Both the Syrian Government and the opposition must avoid and prevent rifts along confessional and sectarian lines. It must be made clear to everyone carrying a gun or in a command position that all perpetrators of crimes in Syria will be held to account.(...)

For many years, Syrians have shown great generosity and solidarity in hosting refugees from Palestine, Iraq and Somalia. The international community should come to Syria's aid in its own time of need. The crisis in Mali is deepening. The country is under grave threat from extremist armed insurgents. A toxic mix of poverty, extreme climatic conditions, weak institutions, drug smuggling, and the easy availability of deadly weapons is causing profound misery and dangerous insecurity in and beyond Mali. More than 350,000 Malians have fled their homes. Eighteen million people across the Sahel region are affected by the consequences, including the threat of food shortages.(...)

The protection of civilians is a growing concern. There are reports of sexual violence, recruitment of child soldiers and reprisals against civilian Tuareg and Arab populations. The International Criminal Court has opened an investigation into alleged war crimes.

I have dispatched to Bamako an advance UN team to assist on both the political and security tracks. The team includes expertise on political affairs, military planning, human rights and gender concerns. Additional staff will deploy in the days ahead, giving us a presence on the ground able to lend full support to the process. The team has already begun discussions with Malian partners on a transitional roadmap that would cover all key issues.(...)

The governments and people of the Sahel need our full support. The United Nations has mobilized over \$1 billion to support the immediate needs of affected populations, including more than 1 million children under the age of five at risk of acute malnutrition.

While recent rainfall promises a better harvest season, the warning lights continue to flash.

My Special Envoy for the Sahel, Mr. Romano Prodi, has been focusing on four key issues: security; governance; humanitarian requirements; and development. And he is engaging a full range of stakeholders, including women, religious and business leaders, representatives of the region's tribes, and others.(...)

Here in Davos today we have also been looking beyond crisis to the far horizon, the shape of the world a decade or two from now, the need to provide water, energy, food and health for an expanding human population.

That far horizon is actually nearer than we think. Those supposedly longer-term issues are actually silent crises with us today: the death of children from preventable diseases; the melting of the polar ice caps because of climate change. (...)

Our duty is to show solidarity with those today seeking democracy and dignity, and with those tomorrow, our children and theirs, who have a right to inherit a world of stable societies and a secure resource base. My fervent hope and determination is to rise to these tests, from Syria to the Sahel, from climate change to extreme poverty. Let not our inaction today lead to harsh judgement tomorrow. From Syria and Mali today, to the foundations for peace and prosperity tomorrow, that is my call to action to you and to the world at this time.

Read the full speech [here](#) .