



UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon writes that “the United Nations is an agile first responder at times of disaster, and often a last resort for problems found too vexing for others,” in an Op-ed article published in several newspaper worldwide.

In the article the Secretary-General focuses on progress on Syria, the debate on development, Iran and the organization itself during the recent annual General Debate of the 68th General Assembly

Ban Ki-moon: A wave of diplomatic progress at the United Nations.

There are few better ways to take the world’s pulse than through the unique convening power of

the United Nations. Over the past two weeks, during the whirlwind of meetings and speeches that characterizes the opening of the annual session of the General Assembly, I met with the leaders or foreign ministers of countries and groups representing 99 per cent of the world's population.

What beats in the heart of the human family? First, a yearning to be free from conflict, prejudice, inequality, a warming climate and the hopelessness of joblessness. Second, excitement at living in an era of tremendous opportunity and being the first generation that can end extreme poverty. Based on the diplomacy that just took place at the United Nations, and fully aware of the steep challenges ahead, I am encouraged about our prospects.

The week produced a breakthrough Security Council resolution on Syria -- the first hopeful news on the crisis after years of deadlock and inertia. The United Nations and the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons will now undertake an urgent joint mission to safeguard and eliminate Syria's chemical weapons stockpiles and programmes. This is both a gain for international peace and security and a boost to efforts to end the conflict.

The Council also adopted a strong statement on Syria's humanitarian plight, and we continue to press for access, an end to arms flows and violations of human rights and, above all, the convening of an international conference to deal with ending this horrendous conflict. We cannot be satisfied with destroying chemical weapons while the wider war is destroying Syria. Military victory is an illusion; the only answer is a negotiated transition to the new Syria that the country's people need and deserve. We are determined to bring the parties to the table in mid-November.

Progress was not limited to Syria. Iran and the United States used UN settings for overtures aimed at reversing decades of tension. High-level meetings brought progress on the democratic transitions in Myanmar and Yemen, the complex crisis in the Sahel, and implementation of the peace framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes region. Member States pledged strong support for Syria's neighbours, which are hosting 2 million refugees, and the Middle East Quartet met for the first time in more than a year to support the recent resumption of Israeli and Palestinian negotiations.

Nor were the gains of the Assembly's opening weeks confined to immediate peace and security challenges. The United Nations also pressed ahead on sustainable development -- our most critical long-term challenge.

The year 2015 will be a historic opportunity: simultaneously the deadline for achieving the Millennium Development Goals, adopting a new post-2015 development agenda, and completing a new agreement on climate change. The MDGs have captured the imagination, focussed our efforts and saved millions of lives. They have proven how development aid and partnership among diverse actors can help build a better world. Yet on some goals, we lag badly, and too many people are excluded or face exploitation, from mines to fields to factory floor. As we strive to finish the job on one set of goals and define another for the post-2015 period, there is already broad consensus that women's rights, governance and action on the overarching threat of climate change must figure prominently. I will hold a Climate Summit next September in New York, and many leaders have already indicated their intention to attend.

The United Nations is an agile first responder at times of disaster, and often a last resort for problems found too vexing for others. At times the Organization is in the lead, at others it is among a constellation of actors. At times we reach our goals; sometimes we fall short. But the Organization works every single day, around the clock, around the globe, to advance the goals of humankind in the most trying circumstances. Diplomacy and multilateral action continue to show their worth as the first and best option for addressing both the crises of the present and the complex challenges of our shared future. The centrality of the United Nations today reflects the global logic of our times: with our fates ever more entwined, our future must be one of ever deeper and wider cooperation.