



Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and World Bank President Jim Yong Kim announced on Friday that they are teaming up for a trip to the Sahel this week to address pressing issues in the vast African region such as pervasive poverty, food insecurity and conflict.

"The Sahel is one of the most impoverished and fragile places on the planet," said Mr. Ban in a joint press conference in New York. "We are going together to listen and act. We are convinced the cycle of crises in the Sahel can be broken. The region can move from fragility to sustainability."

Earlier this year, Mr. Ban and Mr. Kim travelled together to Africa's long troubled Great Lakes region in support of a new peace framework agreed by leaders there. It was the first joint visit by a UN Secretary-General and a President of the World Bank. The new trip seeks to build on joint efforts, foster international support, and spotlight the challenges currently facing the Sahel.

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"Our message on this critical visit and around the world is that peace and development must go hand-in-hand," Mr. Ban said. "At this time last year, Mali was in crisis. Since then, our collective efforts have helped not only improve the political and security situation in Mali but also address some of the broader challenges in the Sahel. The time is ripe to build on these gains."

The Sahel has suffered three major droughts in less than a decade. More than 11 million people are at risk of hunger and 5 million children under five are at risk of acute malnutrition. In addition, political instability and unconstitutional changes in Governments have had significant economic and social consequences in the region and terrorist acts, as well as organized crime, have threatened the region's stability.

"These challenges cannot be overcome by any Government or organization alone," Mr. Ban said. "The issues are connected and we need an approach that connects our efforts."

"Many of these countries have chronically low economic growth which lags behind the urgent need for job creation," Mr. Kim told reporters via teleconference from Washington D.C. "We need to work together so that people of the Sahel can have peace and development."

He stressed that the World Bank's new approach to the Sahel will entail working side by side with the region's Governments, the UN and other development partners and will promote greater stability, resilience and sustainable development in the five core countries of the region: Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger.

"Our aim is to address the root causes of poverty, conflict and helplessness. As a part of this new approach, the World Bank will mobilize substantial public and private sources in support. We'll help strengthen social safety nets for people, lower the cost of energy and increase support for irrigation and pastoralism, as well transform the state of agriculture in the region," Mr. Kim said.

The Sahel stretches from Mauritania to Eritrea, including Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Niger,

UN chief, World Bank President announce joint visit to help Sahel region

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Nigeria, Senegal and Sudan, a belt dividing the Sahara desert and the savannahs to the south. The joint visit will start from Mali and continue to Niger, Burkina Faso and Chad.

Mr. Ban and Mr. Kim will be joined by Mr. Ban's Special Envoy to the region, Romano Prodi, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, President of the African Development Bank Donald Kaberuka, and Commissioner for Development of the European Union Andris Piebalgs.

Source: [UN News Centre](#)