



Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon says that John F. Kennedy championed the values of the UN.

In an [Op-ed article](#) to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the former US President's death, Mr. Ban says that Kennedy had great faith in the United Nations

“His last speech to the General Assembly just weeks before his death reads like a primer for addressing the problems that still plague us today,” writes the UN Secretary-General. “He stressed the indivisibility of human rights. He opposed wasteful military spending. He called for racial and religious tolerance. He praised United Nations peacekeeping. And he insisted that we embrace peace not only on paper, but in our hearts”, writes Mr. Ban in his Op-ed which was published in US Today (22 November) and other newspapers around the world, adding that “these are all values I defend along with a corps of dedicated United Nations staff members around the world.”

Ban Ki-moon met President Kennedy and got his autograph when he visited the US in a group

of young South-Korean students and got his autograph, which unfortunately quickly became “dispersed among the many fingerprints of my friends who grabbed at the glossy White House Bulletin and passed it around with such eagerness that by the time it returned to me no trace of his writing remained.”

“But nothing could remove the imprint the American President made on my life. Meeting him was a turning point. His words that day in the South Lawn sparked my decision to become a diplomat and dedicate myself to public service.

As he looked out at our diverse group representing countries that were then on different sides of the Iron Curtain, President Kennedy reminded us that we could be friends even if our governments were not. And he said the words I chose to live by: “There are no national boundaries; there is only a question of whether we can extend a helping hand,” writes Mr. Ban.

*Photo: President John Kennedy (USA) addresses the 16th session of the United Nations General Assembly. 25 September 1961*