As delivered

THE DEPUTY SECRETARY-GENERAL

REMARKS AT COMMEMORATION OF THE 70TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE UNITED NATIONS

Tehran
12 October 2015
Mr. Minister, Dr. Araghchi,
Resident Coordinator Gary Lewis,
Excellencies,
Dear Participants at this important event,

I am very glad to be back in Tehran to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the UN together with all of you. In the 1980s I was part of the mediation efforts of the United Nations – led by former Prime Minister Olof Palme of Sweden – to broker an end to the devastating Iran-Iraq war.

I am proud to have been involved in that effort, although it took far too long to end this terrible war. I have vivid memories not only of the diplomacy over the years 1980-1991, but also of Iran – your people, your culture and your history.

Today I bring you greetings from Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. He recalls his own important visit to Iran in 2012. Just two weeks ago, he had very good meetings in New York with HE President Rouhani and HE FM Jawad Zarif.

At the outset, the Secretary-General and I offer our deep and sincere condolences for the tragic loss of life of a great number of Iranian worshippers at the recent Haj in Mecca.
Dear Participants,

Iran is a founding Member State of the United Nations. Your country, through the Tehran Declaration of 1943, is closely associated with the birth of the Organization. So, our celebration today has historic roots in your country.

Over the decades, Iran and the United Nations have cooperated in many areas.

One of Iran’s most important contributions has been to host one of the largest refugee populations in the world over the past three decades. We are grateful to Iran for receiving millions of Afghans, and for its close cooperation with the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR). With the current refugee crises in the Middle East and Africa, we see a growing challenge to mobilise greater solidarity and to offer constructive solutions.

At home, Iran has made important strides in meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Per capita income has doubled since 1980. Life expectancy has risen considerably. School enrolment is rising. Women now make up more than half of all university students in the country. Iran is one of the few
countries to have reached the MDG on maternal mortality and is on track to substantially reduce child mortality.

For all this, the United Nations congratulates you and wishes you continued progress with the new transformative Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted at the Summit in New York on September 25.

We are aware that Iran still, like many nations, faces significant challenges, in areas related to employment, environmental protection, human rights and ensuring space for civil society and the media to play their vital roles.

One area of particular importance is the need to create opportunities for young people – especially jobs. Iran, like many other countries, must make special efforts to use the demographic opportunity of a large youth population. Youth unemployment is a huge challenge in today’s world – with important social, economic and political ramifications.
Dear Participants,

The political situation across the region remains deeply troubling.

The crises in Syria, Yemen and Iraq continue to cause tremendous suffering and instability. Regional rivalries are fuelling the crises. Extremist groups continue to attract recruits and control territory, terrorising large parts of the population on ethnic or religious grounds. In Syria and Yemen, it is urgent to move rapidly towards cessation of hostilities and a serious political process and negotiated solutions.

And, tragically, resolving the Israel-Palestine conflict still remains a central task and challenge for all of us as a matter of justice and long term peace and security.

Iran has considerable influence in the region. We at the United Nations continue the dialogue with Iran on how it can contribute to regional peace and security. My own visit to Tehran is an example of such a dialogue.
I am hopeful that new avenues to peaceful conditions will open, now that there has been a historic agreement between Iran and the P5+1 countries, welcomed by a great majority of Member States. That agreement showed the immense value of patient and skilful diplomacy. I am confident that the same spirit can be mobilised to address other troubling issues and situations. We all have an interest in peace and security in the region.

Dear Participants,

The United Nations at 70 can look back on a proud record of
- helping dismantle colonialism,
- triumphing over apartheid,
- keeping the peace in troubled places,
- providing life-saving assistance to victims of war and disaster,
- fighting hunger and disease,
- protecting the environment,
- advancing the rule of law and
- safeguarding human rights.

Yet, we are keenly aware that today’s international landscape is scarred by conflict, poverty, inequalities and repression. So, we
all have work to do. Our mission is not accomplished. And we need to continue to reform our organization and adapt it to the new global landscape.

Fortunately, today there are opportunities to realize the vision of our founding Charter.

World leaders have just adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, calling for a new era in our work to end poverty and build lives of dignity for all on a healthy planet. President Rouhani was among the many world leaders who came to UN Headquarters in New York last month to show his personal support for this landmark agreement.

The new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are the culmination of the most open consultative policy-making process in UN history, reaching out to over a million people. The new agenda reflects the complexity of today’s world.

It is integrated, establishing the links between the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. And it underscores the importance of good governance and
strong, transparent institutions in combatting instability and mismanagement.

We count on the Government of Iran to turn the new Agenda into action at the national level, and to adapt the global goals to national economic planning. The United Nations system in Iran stands ready to assist you in every way possible in this endeavour.

The new development agenda has a great potential to help promote peaceful and prosperous societies. A more sustainable world will be a safer world.

We also look to Iran to help maintain the momentum of sustainability by actively supporting an ambitious climate change agreement in Paris in December.

In this regard I would like to reiterate the Secretary-General's call to all countries, including Iran, to submit their Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) well before the meeting.
The United Nations is also working hard to strengthen its peace and security toolbox at a time of rising demand, in particular in Africa. We are currently deploying around 125,000 men and women – more peacekeepers than ever.

Our humanitarian agencies and staff are trying to reach more people in dire need than ever before. But our response mechanisms and financial resources are being stretched to the limit. Refugees often live in desperate conditions, choosing to embark on dangerous journeys with an uncertain final destination.

Major UN reviews are under way dealing with peace-making, peace-keeping and peacebuilding. We are placing ever greater emphasis on prevention, mediation and the peaceful resolution of disputes (Chapter VI of the UN Charter).

We are also working to better and earlier deal with the causes of conflict. We give heightened attention to violations of human rights, which are often the warning signs of worse to come.

In the months ahead, the Secretary-General will also be presenting to the General Assembly an action plan to strengthen efforts to prevent violent extremism.
Dear Participants, dear Friends,

In closing, after 70 years, the Charter’s vision for a better world and the directions set in its Preamble remain the goals and dreams for people everywhere – the search for peace, human rights, the rule of law, and larger social and economic freedom. Dag Hammarskjold spoke of the future in two dimensions: on the one hand the horizon, or vision – but also the step you take tomorrow towards that vision.

We at the United Nations look forward to continued partnership with Iran in our shared efforts to bring the Charter to life everywhere, for a life in dignity for everyone. Let us never forget that the first three words of the Charter are “We the Peoples”. It is to the peoples in our nations that we are ultimately responsible and accountable.

I thank you for your attention and for choosing to celebrate the 70th Anniversary of the UN together with us today.