

**'YOU CAN – AND DO – INSPIRE PEOPLE TO CHANGE,' SECRETARY-GENERAL SAYS,
ENCOURAGING SUMMIT OF RELIGIOUS, SECULAR LEADERS ON CLIMATE CHANGE
TO 'MAKE YOUR VOICES HEARD'**

Following is the text of UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's speech, as prepared for delivery, to a Summit of Religious and Secular Leaders on Climate Change, in London today:

Thank you for your warm welcome. It is a privilege to be here at this important event. I am grateful that Prince Philip has brought us together to contemplate our commitment to this Earth, our one and only home. We are all familiar with Prince Philip's long-standing efforts on behalf of our natural environment. He has served the Worldwide Fund for Nature as a patron and President Emeritus for many years. He has helped raise awareness among people and Governments of the immense value of our environmental resources. For too long, we have taken these resources for granted.

And we are still a long way from acknowledging their true value. This forum can help in some way to redress the balance. You bring with you today the strengths of diverse cultures and beliefs. You speak to the heart of humanity's deepest needs, our concerns and hopes for the world.

You remind us of what unites us as a human family. Together, we must unite to face a momentous global challenge -- minimizing dangerous climate change and making peace with the planet.

I have long believed that when Governments and civil society work toward a common goal, transformational change is possible. Faiths and religions are a central part of that equation.

Indeed, the world's faith communities occupy a unique position in discussions on the fate of our planet and the accelerating impacts of climate change. As a secular organization, the United Nations has no common religion. But, like all the major faiths, we too work on behalf of the disadvantaged and the vulnerable. We share the same ethical foundation: a belief in the inherent dignity of all individuals.

That is why we work in partnership with Governments, corporations, civil society and faith-based groups. That is why we support the Alliance of Civilizations, which is fighting extremism and working to improve understanding and cooperation among nations and peoples. It is why we work with organizations like the Alliance of Religions and Conservation, which is co-hosting this event. We are united by the belief that what unites us as human beings is stronger than what divides us. We believe that through discussion, cooperation, and common effort, we can build a more peaceful world.

The peace that comes from knowing where the next meal will come from... knowing your family is safe from violence and disease... knowing that your children can finish school and get a job. The peace that will come from preserving the riches of this planet for coming generations. That is why we are here today. Your conference comes together under the banner of “Many heavens, one Earth”.

We are all part of the larger web of life. Together, let us work to protect and respect our planet -- our only home. Many of you have experienced first-hand the climate crisis we face. You know that climate change affects us all, but not equally.

Look, for example, at the typhoons that have recently been battering Southeast Asia. They have cost many lives. Tens of thousands of people have lost homes and the means of making a living.

These events remind us again that those most likely to suffer first and worst from the impacts of climate change are the poor. The poor are also least responsible for the emissions currently in our atmosphere.

Protecting the poor and respecting our planet and the resources it provides is an ethical and scientific imperative. It is consistent with the teachings of many religions.

Increasingly, it is also a matter of survival. Next month, the world’s Governments will gather in Copenhagen to find a way forward on climate change.

We must reduce greenhouse gas emissions. We must assist the poorest, the most vulnerable, to adapt to climate impacts already locked into the atmosphere. It is a pivotal moment for our world. Copenhagen provides a unique opportunity.

If we tackle climate change properly, we can advance many other goals as well. Green growth can make inroads against global poverty. We can improve public health... food security... water security... energy security...

We can lay a foundation for peace and security for generations to come. We can define a more sustainable relationship with our planet. It is an inter-generational issue. And it is a moral issue.

This is why the voices, the deeds and the teachings of the world’s faith groups are so vitally important. In the coming weeks, I urge you to make your voices heard loud and clear.

We must prevent further damage to our common home. We need a global climate deal that is comprehensive, equitable and ambitious. A deal that involves all countries working toward a long-term goal to limit global temperature rise to safe levels consistent with science. I have called on the industrialized countries to take the first steps. Equity and historical responsibility require no less. But all countries must do more. Every country must be part of the solution.

Political leaders must understand that the public expects action -- now. Faith communities can help communicate this message.

We need to reduce our impact on this planet. We need to live in a more sustainable manner. Human-caused climate change is but one example of what occurs when we fail to do so. The world's faith communities are among the oldest and most enduring of institutions. We are here today to listen, to share and to celebrate your long-term plans to tackle climate change.

The word "celebrate" is important to highlight. Through your commitments, we see how the world's faith and religious communities are responding to the need for urgent climate action. Three things strike me as I look around this room. The first is the scale of your reach as stakeholders in the climate challenge.

Together, the major faith groups have established, run, or contribute to over half of all schools world-wide.

You are the third largest category of investors in the world. You produce more weekly magazines and newspapers than all the secular press in the European Union.

Your potential impact is enormous. You can establish green religious buildings. Invest ethically in sustainable products. Purchase only environmentally-friendly goods. You can set an example for the lifestyles of billions of people. Your actions can encourage political leaders to act more boldly in protecting people and the planet. Second, you are among the most powerful educators in this world.

Your youth organizations reach hundreds of millions of young people around the world. Nearly all your long-term plans include training young people on how to protect their planet.

Third, this celebration here at Windsor reflects the creative talents you bring to bear on this issue. You can -- and do -- inspire people to change. As we take the final steps on our journey to Copenhagen, that inspiration is critical.

I ask each of your faiths and religions to pray for a fair, balanced and effective way forward. Your practical commitments can encourage political leaders to act more courageously in protecting people and the planet. Together let us walk a more sustainable path -- one that respects our planet and provides for a safer, healthier more equitable future for all.

Thank you.