

Sunhak Founders' Centenary Award acceptance speech: Much Work Remains

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Honorable Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, Universal Peace Federation founder, the chairman, Dr. Il-sik Hong, and His Excellency, Macky Sall, president of Senegal, represented by His Excellency Amadou Ba, foreign minister of Senegal and also Rev. Younan, distinguished guests, former heads of state or government, excellencies, ladies and gentlemen: It is a great honor for me to receive the Sun Hak Peace Prize. I'm incredibly grateful for this esteemed honor, and it is quite meaningful to follow in the footsteps of the previous luminary awardees you have bestowed this honor upon. I receive this with a humble mind. This very honorable, special peace award from the Sun Hak Committee. I accept it on behalf of so many people around the world who are still yearning, hoping that the United Nations will do much better, do much more for all the people who really need our support at this time. I am deeply humbled that only I received this honor. Thank you again for your recognition.

My special recognition goes to Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon for her visionary patronage of this award, as well as for her longtime advocacy efforts in support of world peace, global citizenship, and sustainable development issues. I also take this opportunity to commend the impressive work and forward-thinking vision of the Sunhak Peace Prize Foundation. The critical efforts by the Sunhak Peace Prize Foundation are essential as we collectively strive to expand essential understanding, cooperation and tolerance on the road to world peace and global sustainability.

In this connection, I simply couldn't be prouder to receive this award intended to further the ideals of such a pioneering individual who so firmly believed in the importance of peace, human development, coexistence and environmental protection. My deepest gratitude goes to the Sunhak Peace Prize Foundation members for this very special honor and recognition of my modest contribution to world peace and development. Thank you very much again.

Increasing global threats

Our world is changing, and this is bringing many new challenges and uncertainties to the geopolitical and economic order. Multilateral cooperation is viewed with increasing skepticism. Multilateralism, represented and symbolized by the United Nations, is under great threat. Multilateralism has been the basic guiding framework of the world, particularly since the end of the Second World War. Those countries that are leading the world have benefited most from multilateralism. They are now speaking about protectionism, unilateralism, individualism, isolationism. I am deeply concerned as a former UN secretary general. We have to continue to succeed under the guiding principle of the United Nations -- multilateralism.

At the same time, our climate crisis is deepening as wildfires burn, sea levels rise higher, and temperatures continue to surge. Under this backdrop of instability and waning internationalism, I firmly believe that we must work together. There is no country, no individual -- no matter how resourceful, no matter how powerful one may be -- that can do it alone. We have to have all hands on deck together. That has been my consistent, continuing message, even after my retirement from the United Nations. I am deeply honored and deeply encouraged by so many people who are here who are peace-lovers and who love and respect human dignity.



Ongoing problem-solving efforts

During my ten-year tenure as secretary general of the United Nations, I strove to execute my global leadership by leveraging the power of partnerships and promoting the spirit of global citizenship. I have met so many world leaders, so many business leaders, so many civil society leaders. I have met very few leaders who possess global citizenship, with a global vision. We have to foster our youth, the young generation, young women and men, so that they become global leaders with a global vision. That is my honest hope.

As you have seen in the video, I am proud that during my time as secretary general I prioritized the two most dangerous existential threats: one is the climate crisis and the other one [collectively] is the [threats addressed by] the Sustainable Development Goals. A global partnership, including active participation of non-profit organizations, civil society groups, religious organizations, philanthropists and other key stakeholders, like you, is necessary if we are to deliver what the United Nations has promised to the world.

The United Nations adopted the Sustainable Development Goals on September 25, 2015, a day on which all the leaders of the world had gathered in the General Assembly and promised that by the end of 2030, there should be no one who suffers from poverty; there would be no one who should die needlessly from preventable diseases; there should be nobody whose human dignity is disrespected. These are the promises of those world leaders. These are the promises of the United Nations. Sustainable Development Goals also include young people, who are absolutely essential to so many of the world's challenges such as achieving the SDGs, tackling climate change, building peace and resolving conflicts.

I have been trying to give my best efforts even after my retirement from the United Nations, to do almost the same things I used to do at the United Nations -- promoting human rights, promoting civil society's participation [on issues such as] climate change and the Sustainable Development Goals. In this regard, two years ago, I launched the Ban Ki-moon Center for Global Citizens based in Vienna, Austria, and in Seoul. I have established the Ban Ki-moon Foundation for a Better Future. We must work together with all the people of the world who should be able to enjoy a better future.

The road ahead

The actions we take over the next ten years until 2030 will be critical to ensuring the future viability of both humanity and our planet, so we must work hard, we must work together to achieve true peace harmony and reconciliation among people. What type of peace? I am reminded of the words of President John F. Kennedy, who said, "I am talking about genuine peace, the kind of peace that makes life on earth worth living, the kind that enables men and nations to grow and hope and build a better life for their children... not merely peace in our time, but peace for all time."

In 2020 (the Year of the Rat, the White Rat) and beyond, [regarding] our common destiny, grounded in sustainability, peace and prosperity, it is our moral duty and political leaders' political duty to realize this shared destiny for all global citizens in the years to come. With this, I am committed to work even harder to make this world better for all of you.

Lastly, and this is quite a coincidence, I have found today, standing at this podium... Please look at that picture of me [on a large poster at the back of the hall]. I am wearing the same necktie then as my wife has chosen for me today, knowing that I would be receiving a peace prize. This is the United Nations' symbol [repeated as a design on his tie] on every September 21, the United Nations' International Day of Peace, I have been wearing this tie.

So let us work together, ladies and gentlemen, to realize peace in this world together. Thank you very much. Kamsahamnida.

