

United Nations Day

Continued commitment for better, brighter future

Ban Ki-moon
SECRETARY-GENERAL, THE UNITED NATIONS

National flags are a mark of pride and patriotism in every country around the world. But there is only one flag that belongs to all of us.



That blue flag of the United Nations was a banner of hope for me growing up in wartime Korea.

Seven decades after its founding, the United Nations remains a beacon for all humanity. Every day, the United Nations feeds the hungry and shelters those driven from their homes.

The United Nations vaccinates children who would otherwise die from preventable diseases.

The United Nations defends human rights for all, regardless of race, religion, nationality, gender or sexual orientation.

Our peacekeepers are on the frontlines of conflict; our mediators bring warriors to the

peace table; our relief workers brave treacherous environments to deliver life-saving assistance.

The United Nations works for the entire human family of seven billion people, and cares for the earth, our one and only home.

And it is the diverse and talented staff of the United Nations who help bring the Charter to life.

The 70th anniversary is a moment to recognize their dedication – and to honor the many who made the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty.

The world faces many crises, and the limits of collective international action are painfully clear. Yet no single country or organization can address today's challenges alone.

The timeless values of the U.N. Charter must remain our guide. Our shared duty is to "unite our strength" to serve "we the peoples."

To mark this anniversary, monuments and buildings across the world are being illuminated in U.N. blue. As we shine a light on this milestone anniversary, let us reaffirm our commitment to a better and brighter future for all.

Expanding education to address global climate change

Michiru Mekata
SPECIAL TO THE JAPAN TIMES

The Sustainable Development Goals that were adopted at the U.N. Sustainable Development Summit held at the New York U.N. Headquarters from Sept. 25 to 27, comprised 17 specific goals, namely calling on everybody to realize sustainable development for mankind in the coming 15 years.

On Oct. 6, Kaoru Nemoto, director at the U.N. Information Centre (UNIC), and Hiroko Ida, a weather forecaster for the Japan Broadcasting Corp. (NHK), exchanged their views, specifically focusing on the 13th goal that asks for urgent action to combat climate change and its impact.

The discussion focused mainly on the important role of education in tackling the issue.



Kaoru Nemoto (left) and weather forecaster Hiroko Ida pose during a discussion of climate change at the U.N. Information Centre in Shibuya Ward on Oct. 6. YOSHIKI MIURA

Nemoto: I assume that changing our light bulbs to LEDs reduces our energy consumption level, too. On a broader level, I notice the dynamic power of the private sector. It is encouraging to see various industries divesting from the use of coal and oil, acknowledging that carbon emissions come at a cost.

Ida: Turning our eyes to each country, Japan is in fact a treasure trove of disaster prevention measures. For example, disaster-related drills are held everywhere, and people stockpile food, water and other items. I think such knowledge and actions should be actively disseminated to the world.

Nemoto: Furthermore, I find it meaningful that the U.N. Principles for Responsible Investment (PRI) are becoming a mainstream concept among institutional investors around the world.

These investors contribute to the development of a more sustainable global financial system by understanding the implications of sustainability. Concurrently, the PRI urges its signatories to incorporate environmental, social and corporate governance issues to their investment decision-making and ownership practices.

Here, I also would like to talk just a little about the "Turn the World U.N. Blue" U.N.70 Campaign. As the U.N. is celebrating its 70th anniversary this year, it will light up more than 200 landmark locations in U.N. blue on Oct. 24, in about 60 countries. In Japan, a total of 13 landmarks have decided to join the campaign, including Tokyo Skytree, Yokohama Marine Tower and Kanazawa Castle. The participants are encouraged to use LEDs or other ecologically friendly lighting methods.

Ida: I think that would serve as an ideal opportunity for everybody around the globe to seriously contemplate climate change and the future of mankind.

Stable presence in rough times

David M. Malone
RECTOR, UNITED NATIONS UNIVERSITY; UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL, THE UNITED NATIONS

The United Nations of today is not the U.N. of 70 years ago, or even 20 years ago. It has, of necessity, evolved and grown in response to changes in the international political and security sphere and the emergence of new global threats.



In addition to its five principal organs, which include the General Assembly, the Security Council, and the U.N. Secretariat, the United Nations comprises a wide range of specialized agencies, programs, funds, commissions and other entities (some only loosely tied to it such as the International Monetary Fund and World Bank).

Through a remarkable achievement in providing a forum for global cooperation, the U.N. has often faced criticism of its structure and operations, and failure to fully realize the lofty goals to which it aspires. The U.N. Security Council is (and historically has been) a particular target of complaint. Although confrontation among the council's five permanent members is now the exception rather than the norm, the resurgence of a "great power" rivalry has given rise to fears of a return to cold war-era paralysis.

The council's continuing deadlock over the Syrian civil war is particularly troubling. And undermining the council's continued legitimacy and authority over the long run is the fact that its composition, notably relating to its existing permanent members, does not reflect today's power realities. As well, the body's decision-making process is lacking in transparency.

Nevertheless, the reality is that without the U.N., the world would almost certainly have been a much more turbulent, truculent and tragic place since 1945.

The U.N. has registered major successes in development, global health, peacekeeping, human rights, and humanitarian response. Through cooperation with global and local partners, the U.N. system provides food assistance to more than 80 million people in 75 countries, and supports nearly 55 million refugees in 123 countries. Last year alone the U.N. helped 8.6 million children receive education, vaccinated 22 million children for measles, and enabled 18 million people to access clean water.

This is a notable year for several landmark U.N. processes underpinning efforts to promote sustainable development.

In June, the "Report of the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations" was delivered to the secretary-general. The product of some six months of intensive work, this report provides a comprehensive assessment of the state of U.N. peace operations, and will serve to shape future U.N. peacekeeping actions in the light of emerging needs and evolving challenges.

The 21st Session of the Conference of the Parties (COP21) to the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change, in December, will also be a landmark. There, delegates will — for the first time in over two decades of U.N. negotiations — seek to achieve a legally binding and universal agreement on climate (with the aim of limiting global warming to less than 2 Celsius).

Another important achievement this year was gaining consensus on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that will drive the post-2015 development agenda. U.N. member states in late September formally adopted a bold agenda of 17 SDGs that aim to end extreme poverty, fight inequality and injustice, and respond to climate change.

U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has been very active on a range of issues. In addition to actively pushing for action to mitigate and adapt to climate change, he has championed individual rights, including ending discrimination based on sexual orientation. "Personal

disapproval, even society's disapproval," he declared, "is no excuse to arrest, detain, imprison, harass or torture anyone — ever."

In closing, I wish to note that next year marks the 60th anniversary of Japan's accession to U.N. membership. Japan has been a remarkably proactive contributor to the work of the U.N., has served 10 times as a non-permanent member of the Security Council and has long been the second-largest contributor to the U.N. budget. Our warm thanks go to the Japanese government and people for their commitment to the U.N. — and particularly for hosting so generously the United Nations University headquarters in Tokyo these past 40 years.

The future holds challenges that we cannot imagine today. I am confident that the United Nations will adapt and respond to make the world a safer and better home for both current and future generations.

Nemoto: The Sustainable Development Goals are very dynamic and constructive for pursuing the future we really want. In addition to fighting climate change, it reflects people's determination to end poverty; achieve gender equality; conserve and sustainably use the oceans; and protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, among other items.

Ida: Today, the overall climate is going to extremes around the world. Abnormal weather brings overwhelmingly hot summers, freezing cold winters, huge rainfalls that cause massive landslides and other meteorological phenomena. Though Japan's weather forecast system is accurate and the information transmission system is advanced compared to many other countries, such extreme weather conditions are difficult to predict and often exceed our forecasting capability.

On top of that, the general public tends to turn a blind eye to such natural hazards, believing that they won't become vic-

tims of such weather abnormalities.

Nemoto: That may well be the case, because we hear too often about record-high temperatures or record-breaking rainfall occurring around the globe. I fear we get too used to such news. That's a dangerous situation, because abnormal climate could ultimately destroy our livelihood, economy and society.

One solution to overcome such condition, I believe, is education. When the massive Haiyan typhoon whipped through the Philippines in 2013, it brought about a large number of casualties because people didn't evacuate. They didn't know what kind of damage a storm that large could do. But when the country was hit again by the huge typhoon Goni this year, the number of those who died or went missing dropped markedly, since the citizens had learned to prepare and seek shelter before the storm hit. This shows how education plays a crucial role in surviving

natural hazards.

Ida: You're quite right. Learning from past experience is vital. But the reality is that people tend to show little interest in climate change until they are seriously affected. We still have many factories located along the coastline that could well be flooded and be swept away if water levels continue rising together with global warming.

Specifically in terms of Japanese, they tend to think that energy-saving actions are a suffering to be endured. That is a very negative and passive attitude. In contrast, people in other countries think more positively about combating abnormal climate conditions. They seek to tackle the issue now so that Mother Earth can be passed on to future generations in better condition than today.


As for education, teaching children about climate change and accompanying hazards is extremely important. This is because they serve as the advocates for grown-ups around them, especially their parents.

They are the ones who can urge adults to change their weather-affecting actions.

That is why we, the weather forecasters in Japan, organize visits to elementary schools with a quiz show-theme. At each school, we talk about climate change to encourage the students to think seriously about what may happen to the Earth in the future, if we maintain the status quo. It's good that children enjoy learning about the climate in such a way, as the quiz sessions become interactive.

Nemoto: Your approach toward children is wonderful. What other specific actions can we take to mitigate the abnormal weather conditions of today?

Ida: Although we cannot stop using natural resources completely, each person can make a little more effort to reduce CO2 emissions, the principal cause of global warming. For example, we can raise the temperature of our air conditioners to 27 degrees instead of 25 degrees on a hot day.



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Beyond the Boundaries



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congratulates the United Nations
on the 70th anniversary of its founding
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Amateru and Seoritsuhihime: An Emotional First Meeting

Amateru was the first son of the sovereign deities Isanagi and Isanami. As a boy, he learned the ancestral Way of Heaven. Then, at 28, he entered the Haramiya Palace (now Sengen Jinja Shrine in Shizuoka Prefecture) to assume his rule of the land. Twelve daughters of the most powerful nobles were chosen as Amateru's consorts. They were likened to the twelve moons of the year, arranged around Amateru as the sun in the center. Though all were wise and fair, Amateru was smitten by one in particular — the most demure and beautiful Seoritsuhihime Honoko. So great was her allure that he even left his elevated tatami seat and hurried down the palace steps to welcome her — a most exceptional thing to do. To commemorate this unprecedented act, Seoritsuhihime was given the laudatory name Ama-Sagaru-Hi-ni Mukatsu Hime ("Princess Welcomed by the Sun Descending from Heaven"). She was soon elevated to Chief Consort and assisted Amateru in his development of the land.

As the most-favored one, Seoritsuhihime drew jealousy and antagonism from two of the other consorts. So much so that even today, three thousand years later, "Mukatsu" survives in the word *mukatsuku*, its originally positive meaning changed to an expression of disgust or repugnance.

Source: "Hotsuma Tsutae," The Book of Heaven, Chapter 6
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