

**Speech of the Secretary General to the United Nation Environment Programme and the  
4th Annual Subcommittee of the Committee of Permanent Representatives**

*8 March 2017*

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to be here.

I just came from Somalia, and I was in Mogadishu and by Doha.

I think I have just witnessed how in today's world,

We see the combination of conflict with environmental degradation.

Environmental degradation largely accelerated by climate change.

There's two factors that are becoming more and more interlinked

– And with devastating consequences for the population.

Of course people can say, we always had drought,

Drought is not a new phenomenon.

There was always also problems of desertification in different parts of the world;

Natural disasters have always happened,

But what climate change has produced

– And you know it better than me –

Is an acceleration of all other factors.

Combining with the population growth, with food insecurity, with water scarcity, with urbanisation.

So all these megatrends, are becoming more and more interlinked.

Climate change being, in my opinion, the main accelerator of these interlinkages,

– And with devastating humanitarian consequences.

Natural disasters are becoming more and more frequent, more intense, With more terrible humanitarian consequences.

But it is the slow onset of change, That we are witnessing in some parts of the world  
That is creating a tremendous change in the capacity of entire regions of the world,  
To sustain human life.

I have launched last week, a big appeal in relation to four situations in the world,  
With this combination of drought and conflict,

Are creating, already, what technically is considered to be famine,

Or creating situations that are on the verge of famine,

– But there is nothing worse than technical definitions.

Because people die of hunger even if famine is not declared.

It's a technical group of indicators.

But what we have seen,

And what I have seen in Somali where famine has not yet been declared,

Is the dramatic impact of malnutrition, hunger, together with,

As there is a serious water problem and water quality problem,

very quick spreading of diarrhoea and cholera, that is killing a large number of people.

So we have a perfect storm.

A conflict, drought, and linked to the drought,

Environmental conditions that are creating the widespread of diseases,

That are causing more and more victims.

Now, I don't need to explain how important it is for this Assembly.

To commit to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

For this Assembly to commit to all other aspects,  
In which the preservation of our environment,  
Is an absolutely crucial aspect.  
Both for peace and security.  
Competition for natural resources is one of the factors,  
That is undermining global peace.  
And competition for natural resources,  
Is largely influenced by the megatrends I've mentioned.  
So my appeal for your strong commitment to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change,  
And to enhance the ambition that was possible in Paris,  
We know it's not enough, we know we need to go even further,  
And also to convey to your governments,  
The need to have a massive support to those situations in the world,  
in which we are witnessing devastating humanitarian consequences.  
We have just appealed last week for massive contributions to the four countries,  
where we are on the verge of declaring famine.  
But more than that we need to make sure that we link humanitarian relief,  
To building resilience of communities and of societies.  
Which is also linked to investing in adaptation to climate change,  
And to a number of other aspects,  
In which it's also absolutely crucial,  
That the financial commitment that were made by the international community,  
Namely in the context of Paris, and in the context of Addis Ababa, are fully met.

On the other hand, it is also important to say, that I came from Somalia with hope,  
Not only with the kind of horrible feeling of witnessing a tragedy,  
But with hope.

New elections took place, there's a new president,  
That is really committed to build a state in Somalia.

There is a presence of the African Union, with the mission UNSOM,  
And the funding by the international community.

And my appeal is for governments to understand the need,  
To fully support the African Union in their missions.

And at the same time the need to build the institutions of the state.

The institutions that are fundamental for security,  
But also fundamental from the point of view of preservation of the environment,  
In a country where, you can imagine,

The trend will be for desertification, to become more and more a permanent problem.

So the work you do is extremely important

– But please look at work you do as part of a complex picture,

And in which, peace and security, sustainable and inclusive development,

And the respect for human rights of different generations

– And there is a right to environment too, to take into account –

All these dimensions are to be linked together.

And the role of an Assembly like yours, is extremely important.

Don't be just narrowly focused on pollution.

Pollution is very important; we need to get rid of pollution,

or at least to limit its impacts.

But look into it from a global perspective,

Of how you'll be able to integrate sustainable and inclusive development in our world,

And at the same time, create the conditions for societies to be more resilient,

And more resilient to preserve their own peace and their own security,

Which will only be possible if we are able to tame climate change

– And to act in all other factors, that are making the competition for resources a key factor of destabilisation in today's world.

So, I am very happy to be here with you today.

I'm probably disappointing you that I am not telling a lot of things about what you should be doing about pollution,

But sorry for this mental pollution that I introduced in this meeting.

But please, look into things from a comprehensive perspective,

Look into things from a multidisciplinary perspective,

And look into things, taking into account,

That only if the system as a whole, is able to work together,

We will be able to introduce the mechanisms of multilateral governance – that are so necessary,

In a world where the challenges are becoming so huge, and so complex.

Thank you very much.

