

14 December 2016

71st session of the General Assembly

**Opening Remarks by H.E. Peter Thomson,
Concert, Tribute to Ban Ki-moon and Welcoming Antonio Guterres**

Secretary-General,
Secretary-General-designate,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are gathered for today's concert in honour of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, and to welcome Secretary-General-designate Antonio Guterres.

What a privilege it is for us here in the General Assembly Hall to listen to the world-renowned New York Philharmonic, under the musical direction of Alan Gilbert.

I am told this is Mr. Gilbert's last season as Music Director of the New York Philharmonic, thus it is a particular honour for me to thank you on behalf of us all.

Just two days ago, in this very hall, the General Assembly met to pay tribute to the outstanding tenure of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

In moving detail, Member States spoke of the unwavering dedication with which Secretary-General Ban has led the United Nations over the last decade, through what has been a complex period in human history.

Member States spoke of the major global breakthroughs that he forged, agreements that will shape humanity's place on this planet for generations to come.

I refer in particular to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. As a universal masterplan for humanity, if fully implemented these agreements will end extreme poverty, increase prosperity, empower women and girls, build peaceful and inclusive societies, and combat climate change.

The greatest tribute we can all give our departing Secretary-General is for us all to faithfully apply ourselves to implement the agreements he forged.

On Monday, the General Assembly also had the honour of witnessing Secretary-General-designate Guterres take his Oath of Office.

Mr. Guterres was selected as the next Secretary-General following a historically comprehensive selection process. He has demonstrated all the necessary qualities of leadership required for the job at hand and will enter office on January 1st on a huge wave of good will.

We also bid fond adieu at this time to the Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson who in his long service to the United Nations has proven to be one of the truly great humanitarians of his generation.

As both Secretary-General Ban and Secretary-General-designate Guterres now embark on this period of transition, we wish both of them profound success for their journeys ahead.

For us in the General Assembly Hall today, this concert is an opportunity for both celebration and reflection, set to the evocative sound of Mozart's Concerto in A major for Clarinet, and Beethoven's Symphony No. 5.

Music overpowers linguistic, cultural, and geographic divides. It allows us entry to the spirit of our common humanity.

Thereby music becomes an instrument for building our peace, tolerance and understanding.

On behalf of the UN, I thank the New York Philharmonic for this afternoon's performance, and thank Secretary-General Ban and Secretary-General-designate Guterres for their good service to world affairs.