

On the occasion of the address by Ban Ki-Moon
Secretary General of the United Nations on:

Sixty Years of UN Peacekeeping

at The Institute of International and European Affairs



Introductory remarks by Brendan Halligan
Chairman of the Institute of International and European Affairs



Dublin Castle, Tuesday, 7 July 2009

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Secretary General of the United Nations
on

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Opening Remarks by
Brendan Halligan
Chairman of the Institute of International and European Affairs

Secretary General, Excellencies, Distinguished Guests and Members of the Institute.

On behalf of the Institute of International and European Affairs I welcome you to this address on “Sixty Years of UN Peacekeeping” by the UN Secretary General, Ban Ki Moon.

It is a single honour for us to host the Secretary General here in Dublin Castle as part of his official visit to Ireland. We add to the welcomes he has already received and wish him every success during the course of his visit.

Since it was established in 1945, the United Nations has played a unique and indispensable role in maintaining and making peace throughout the world. The organisation has evolved into the first-ever international forum in which all the nations of the earth can assemble, openly debate and freely decide upon the great controversies of the day.

Its success springs in large measure from the fact that despite being created by the victorious Great Powers who had won the Second World War it evolved rapidly into what Conor Cruise O’Brien, probably our greatest diplomat and certainly one of our greatest writers, described as a forum for the small countries, particularly those who had suffered from imperialist oppression. This explains why countries like Ireland particularly value not only the existence, but the tangible contribution of the UN to maintaining and making peace.

We are especially well positioned to make that judgement recalling as we do, in a very particular way, the failure of the League of Nations to uphold the international rule of law in the 1930s.

Meeting here in St. Patrick’s Hall in Dublin Castle, once the heart of imperialist rule in Ireland, we are equally well positioned to appreciate the significance which small countries attach to the rule of law, living as they invariably do in the shadow of powerful, and sometimes imperious, neighbours. It explains why Ireland has participated from the outset of its membership in the UN’s many peacekeeping and peace-enforcing missions across the world.

We recall that Ireland participated in its first UN mission to the Lebanon in 1958 only three

years after we had joined the organisation. Since then, Irish soldiers have served in over 70 missions and at present we have 800 men and women serving in Kosovo and Chad, the latter being an EU peace keeping mission operating under a UN mandate.

It is now a badge of honour for our Defence Forces that the defence of human rights and the rule of law throughout the world is as integral to their role as the defence of the national territory and rule of law here at home.

It is in that context that we welcome Ban Ki-Moon to Dublin to address our Institute on the peacekeeping role of the United Nations over the past six decades.

He comes to us with a distinguished record in the service of his own country and that of the international community. His first name, "Ki-Moon" means "Basis" and "Study or Learning". In European terms, this name would denote a philosopher or thinker. It is an apposite name for a man who represents the collective moral conscience of the civilised world and who is primarily prescribed with the task of translating moral principles into appropriate political action capable of commanding consent and support from a diverse and often competing range of interests.

As to the centrality of his role in asserting the primacy of human rights as the basis of all human society we need only recall that he comes here directly from Myanmar where was urging the military leaders to press ahead with democratic reforms and to release all political prisoners, including the opposition leader, Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi who has now spent more than 13 years under strict house arrest.

He has been well prepared for these onerous duties by a long and distinguished career. Ban-Ki Moon received a Bachelor's degree in International Relations from Seoul University in 1970 and earned a Master's degree in Public Administration from the John

F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University in 1985.

He entered his country's foreign service after graduation and began to specialise in UN affairs and in nuclear non-proliferation policy. Having served as Ambassador in Austria, he was elected as Chairman of the Preparatory Commission of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty Organisation and later became Foreign Minister in 2004.

In foreign policy, he has adopted many advanced positions, such as supporting the International Criminal Court and the initiation of measures to ease relations with North Korea.

He was appointed UN Secretary General in January 2007 and has brought a new perspective on world affairs to the organisation, a perspective made all the more significant by the growing importance of the region into which he was born.

I now invite Mr Ban Ki-Moon, Secretary General of the United Nations, to address the Institute of International and European Affairs on the topic of "Sixty Years of UN Peacekeeping."



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