



**Opening Ceremony of the International Seminar on the 70th
Anniversary of the United Nations: “Seventy Years of the UN:
Missions, Responsibility and Future”**

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*Organised by the United Nations Association of China and the Chinese People's Institute of
Foreign Affairs*

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His Excellency, Mr. Li Baodong, Vice-Minister, Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs,

His Excellency, Mr. Ali Bassan Myinyi, former President of the United Republic of Tanzania,

Ambassador Lu Shumin, President of the United Nations Association of China,

Mr. Yang Wenchang, President, Chinese People's Institute of Foreign Affairs,

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests and colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen

I would like to thank the United Nations Association of China and the Chinese People's Institute of Foreign Affairs for organizing this seminar. I would also like to express my gratitude to the Government of the People's Republic of China for hosting today's event.

The Secretary-General has asked me to send his greetings to you all today as we celebrate the occasion of this unique and wonderful organization's 70th birthday.

On a personal note, I feel honored and privileged to be invited here in my new capacity. I am both old and new at the UN. I am old as it is almost nine years since I started working at the United Nations for the Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. But I am new in the current portfolio, disarmament affairs, barely two months.

I am very happy to meet a number of mentors and cheer leaders for the United Nations and the Secretary General. We deeply appreciate the support rendered by the United Nations Association network and its World Federation led by Ambassador Park Soo-Gil, the eternal boss of the Secretary General and myself, and its core members in China and around the world.

I am proud of what the United Nations stands for, and what it has achieved; and I am proud to represent the United Nations today with my distinguished colleagues from New York and here, Mr. Taye-Brook Zerihoun, Assistant Secretary-General of Political Affairs and Mr. Alain Noudehou, United Nations Resident Coordinator in China.

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is fitting that we celebrate the 70th Anniversary here in China. After all, China is a key Member State and close partner of the UN – as China has risen to global prominence, so too has its engagement with the UN grown.

China shares the United Nations' commitment to ensuring the maintenance of international peace and security – as a permanent member of the Security Council and as the sixth largest contributor to the UN's peacekeeping budget and the largest troop contributor of the Permanent Five.

As a developing nation that has emerged as the world's fastest growing economy, China has embraced the UN's quest to eradicate extreme poverty through the Millennium Development Goals.

One of the world's oldest civilizations, China has enriched the United Nations through its culture and history.

Ladies and Gentlemen

For the past seven decades the UN has fed the hungry, sheltered refugees and vaccinated children against deadly disease. It has been a champion for human rights, regardless of race, religion, nationality, gender or sexual orientation. Today the UN is feeding about 100 million people and protecting about 60 million refugees everyday as well as vaccinating more than half of the children around the world.

UN peacekeepers have been on the front-lines of war and our mediators have worked tirelessly to bring peace in times of conflict. Today the UN is keeping or making peace in over 30 countries with over 120,000 troops, police and civilian staff.

As Secretary-General Ban has said, "The UN has been a beacon of hope for peace, prosperity and human rights."

It is true that the United Nations has its fair share of critics as well as failures, but, in my opinion – and I am sure all of you gathered here will fully share – it is inarguable that without the UN, the world would have been a darker and more dangerous place in which to live.

Ladies and Gentlemen

The 70th anniversary is a moment to reflect on the UN's significant achievements. It also allows us to consider the future – how do we move forward from here?

Over the course of seven decades the world has changed significantly. We are now more economically interdependent than ever before. Technology brings us closer every day. This region, the Asia-Pacific, has emerged as a centre of gravity for growth and economic power. The region now accounts for 32% of global GDP and China alone for over 13%.

Yet the world remains beset by persistent problems: endemic poverty; the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; civil war; and how to protect the world's most vulnerable populations.

At the same time it is confronted by a range of new international challenges: Powerful non-state actors like Daesh and Boko Haram; international health crises such as Ebola and H1N1; cyber threats; and climate change – an issue the Secretary-General has named the defining challenge of this generation.

The rapidly evolving international situation begs the question – does the UN have the capacity to address existing challenges and tackle new and emerging issues?

The answer is a qualified yes, since it is possible, but it is possible only with the full support and assistance of Member States. The UN is at its best when its member states share a unity of purpose and the international solutions they work out are in line with enlightened national self-interests.

Even though the times have changed and so have the circumstances surrounding the UN, its core values have not. We stand for equality, freedom, dignity and peace.

We remain committed to the words enshrined in the UN Charter, to saving succeeding generations from the scourge of war, to fundamental freedoms for all, to human rights, to equal rights, to social progress and better standards of life, a life of dignity for all.

The challenges may mount, but our resolve to confront them does not and should not waiver.

Ladies and Gentlemen

2015 is a critical year for tackling some of the international community's most pressing concerns.

In September, the international community will adopt a set of Sustainable Development Goals. We expect almost all heads of state or government to come. Pope Francis also decides to come to address the special session of the General Assembly for the first time in the history of relations between the Vatican and the UN.

The last fifteen years have seen hundreds of millions lifted out of extreme poverty. But we still have a long way to go to eradicate it. The new goals will build on the gains made but will aim high for the next fifteen years. The recently concluded Addis Ababa meeting on financing for development bodes well for September.

In December, countries must also adopt a new, comprehensive and meaningful climate change agreement to facilitate the transition to low-carbon, resilient economies that provide prosperity while protecting the planet.

On top of these sustainable development related agenda, later this year, the Secretary-General will present to the General Assembly a global Plan of Action to address one of the world's most urgent security problems – combatting and preventing violent extremism. It will be a plan that addresses the root causes of extremism while upholding human rights and the rule of law.

In confronting each of these challenges, the international community has high expectations on China, as a rising world leader, to assist the United Nations and play a leading role. We are grateful to China for taking a proactive leadership in shaping the sustainable development agenda in a people centric and planet friendly manner.

Ladies and Gentlemen

I have spoken at length about challenges, but this occasion is also a chance to focus on new opportunities – opportunities created by new ideas, new technologies and an increasingly

interconnected world. As the Chinese word for 'crisis' – "wei ji" – signifies, it is also an opportunity. Finding a solution to a complex problem is indeed challenging but if we succeed in one, it may help open the path to solving other inter-connected problems. Among other things, this requires collective and multi-disciplinary efforts by the international community. No single country or organization, however big or powerful, cannot tackle this challenge alone.

In the words of Secretary General Ban in his acceptance speech for a second term, we should work together, since together, nothing is impossible.

As we have for the past 70 years, the United Nations stands ready to work with Member States however it can in fulfilling our common task and reaching our common destiny enshrined in the UN Charter.

Thank you.