

**WFUNA**

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KEYNOTE ADDRESS AT THE BEIJING FOREIGN STUDIES UNIVERSITY MODEL UNITED NATIONS 3 DECEMBER 2011, BEIJING, CHINA

Dear Friends,

Nimen hao!

It is wonderful for me to be here with you today, in the occasion of the Model UN organized by the Beijing Foreign Studies University, in front of an audience of three hundred energetic and brilliant students from the top Universities in China.

This is an exciting day for you as you will be embarking in role-playing nations around the world and discussing important topics such as the South China Sea Conflict, the India-Pakistan Peace Plan, the Protection of Stateless Person, and the problems faced by failed States.

I would like to begin by thanking the host, the Beijing Foreign Studies University; the organizers and the staff who have dedicated hundreds of hours to coordinating an event of such scale and quality; and of course all the students and faculty who have kept this 5 year tradition going. This commitment testifies to your unwavering support for the United Nations.

I would especially like to welcome those of you who have travelled here from far-away places as I know that the Model UN organized by the Beijing Foreign Studies University grows more popular each year, and welcomes today students from all regions of China.

One of my favourite Chinese proverbs says: "If you are planning for a year, sow rice; if you are planning for a decade, plant trees; if you are planning for a lifetime educate people" and just as "jade must be carved and polished before it becomes an ornament, you also must be educated before you can achieve great things". As you are completing your education in some of the best Universities in China, participating in a Model UN is a wonderful opportunity to put your education to the test, as well as to learn from your peers.

In order to offer more opportunities to students like you to learn about the United Nations, WFUNA and the Research Center on the United Nations and International Organizations at BFSU have partnered to organise Advanced Trainings on the United Nations at UN headquarters in New York, US, and Geneva, Switzerland. These trainings represent a precious chance to visit UN headquarters, meet key UN staff, diplomats and civil society representatives, and see first hand how the United Nations carry out their mission and their daily activities.

This opening address represents a welcome opportunity for me to share with you some insights on a few of the main challenges and opportunities facing the United Nations today, thinking about the role of young people such as yourselves in addressing these challenges and opportunities through the United Nations.

The UN has been effective in a number of areas, and as a result it is requested to tackle increasingly more, and more complex, challenges. The upcoming year will see the United Nations especially occupied with advancing the agenda on sustainable

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development and the green economy with the Rio+20 Conference, and promoting a new framework for climate change, with the expiration of the Kyoto Protocol in 2012. Peace and Security remain high priorities with the UN currently engaged in 15 peacekeeping operations around the world, and its continued engagement in facilitating a resolution to the conflict in Middle East. Advancement of human rights is also high on the agenda of the United Nations, especially its efforts to end discrimination, to foster gender equality and the empowerment of women, and promote human rights education.

Sustainable development

As many of you already know, in June 2012, the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development will be held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, marking 20 years since the historical Rio Earth Summit formalized global sustainable development goals. The conference will be a chance to secure renewed political commitment for sustainable development, assess the progress made to date in the implementation of sustainable development, and address new and emerging challenges.

The Conference aims at promoting agreement on a new institutional framework for sustainable development and a green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication. In this context, WFUNA supports the creation of a Global Environmental Organization (GEO) as a specialized agency under article 57 of the UN Charter. This upgrade would guarantee the new agency with universal membership, more decision making authority, and increased budgetary autonomy.

A green economy is an economy whose growth in income and employment is driven by public and private investments that reduce carbon emissions and pollution, enhancing energy and resource efficiency, and preventing the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services. Today China is leading the way with its substantial investments in green economy. By 2014 the Chinese government will have spent over 800 million dollars in greening key economic sectors with a subsequent growth of China's environmental protection industry. It is crucial that an increasingly high number of States understand the urgency of investing in a green economy as this will result in improved human well-being and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities.

The need to reduce emissions is at the very heart of the response to climate change. The Kyoto Protocol was adopted to strengthen the global response to climate change and legally bind developed countries to emission reduction targets. The Protocol's first commitment period started in 2008 and ends next year. Therefore we now need to find a strategy forward for the years to come.

Disarmament and Nuclear Power

A world free of nuclear weapons is a strategic priority of the United Nations and one of WFUNA's key goals. Although the costs of nuclear disarmament are formidable and the obstacles are daunting, the inherent dangers of not acting threaten our very existence. The May 2010 review meeting of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) called for a UN-sponsored conference in 2012 to establish a nuclear-free Middle East to be attended by all states in the region. The conference, hosted by Finland aims at establishing a nuclear-weapon-free-zone in the Middle East in 2012. These efforts are essential steps in facing the challenges ahead, in particular in Iran, concerning disagreements about security concerns in the Middle East.

Secretary-General's Ban Ki-moon plans to multiply these nuclear-weapon-free zones to ultimately reach global disarmament.

A decision has been made to revitalise the Conference on Disarmament and granting negative security assurances to non-nuclear weapon states. The General Assembly urged the Conference to agree on and implement a comprehensive programme of work that includes the immediate commencement of negotiations for such a treaty by the end of 2012.



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In light of these challenges and in hopes for long-awaited progress, it is especially important that in the lead-up to these international conferences, there is adequate and balanced attention given to the issues in the media, and that civil society, including students, create public pressure for change.

Responsibility to Protect

With the events of 2011 the Responsibility to Protect concept has come to the forefront of the international agenda. We only need to look to Libya. The nature and scale of attacks against the civilian population in the Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya by military forces and mercenaries constituted grave violations of international human rights and humanitarian law and crimes against humanity. The swift and decisive action of the international community demonstrated how member States prioritized the protection of civilians and acknowledged their commitment to the R2P principles agreed to in 2005. The coming year will reveal the progress of the interim government in Libya led by Prime Minister El-Keib in promoting national reconciliation, public security and human rights protection for the Libyan people.

In line with these important events, we, the World Federation of United Nations Associations together with the UNA of China, the Embassy of Sweden in China and the Research Centre of the United Nations and International Organisations, organised a symposium for increased diverse and regional dialogue on the Responsibility to Protect two days ago, on December 1. This symposium was the second after a first conference in Kenya and a third one in New York to be held next year. We engaged in former Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld's philosophy on conflict prevention: the tension between state sovereignty, the role of intervention and its implications on the R2P norm. The continuous focus on R2P is vital in our global effort to halt genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and ethnic cleansing.

Human Rights

In only a few days' time, on December 10, people around the world will celebrate Human Rights Day. Let me focus on a few important themes of the UN human rights work: elimination of discrimination, women's rights, and human rights education.

"Discrimination lies at the roots of many of the world's most pressing human rights problems. ... Eliminating discrimination is a duty of the highest order". This is a quote from Ms Navanathem Pillay, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, as she launched the Office of the High Commissioner's multi-year campaign to end discrimination. The realisation of all human rights - social, economic and cultural rights as well as civil and political rights - is hampered by discrimination. Yet we can all make a difference; let me invite you to embrace diversity and end discrimination in your communities.

In July 2010, the UN General Assembly created UN Women, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. UN Women has begun its work this year, under the leadership of Michelle Bachelet, with an ambitious agenda that aims to achieve gender equality and eliminate discrimination and violence against women. Gender equality is not only a basic human right, but its achievement has enormous socio-economic consequences. Empowering women fuels thriving economies, promoting productivity and growth. Yet, gender inequalities remain deeply entrenched in every society. UN Women plays a vital role in addressing the challenges of gender wage gaps, the denial of access to basic education and health care as well as violence and gender discrimination.

Human Rights can only be achieved through human rights education which promotes values, beliefs and attitudes that encourage all individuals to uphold their own rights and those of others. In March 2011, the Human Rights Council adopted a Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training. The Declaration sends a strong signal to the international community to strengthen all efforts in human rights education and training through a collective commitment by all stakeholders. WFUNA, together with its

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partners, places an important to human rights education as it organises trainings and offers opportunities for young people and civil society activists to receive education on human rights. You, as students in higher education, play an essential role in promoting global human rights standards.

Tomorrow (4 December 2011) marks the 25th anniversary of the adoption of the UN Declaration on the Right to Development by the General Assembly. This very right entitles "every human person and all peoples to participate in, contribute to, and enjoy economic, social, cultural and political development." At this 25th anniversary let us all reflect on the Declaration on the Right to Development and the ways forward to ensuring freedom from want for all.

Conclusion

Many of you here today will go on to be involved with the UN in a variety of ways. Some of you will represent your country as diplomats on the floor of the General Assembly. Others will work with the United Nations at Headquarters or in field offices or you may join peacekeeping missions and travel to conflict zones. Some of you will contribute in other ways, such as through scientific research, or by raising awareness amongst future generations as teachers and Professors. The options are limitless.

As China gradually opens to the outside world, I trust this experience will inspire you to open yourselves up to learning about the world, other cultures and civilizations. With China's stronger presence in the international arena, the outlook and strong insights you develop today will represent an important asset in the future. I wish you much success – the challenges you are undertaking are difficult, you will have to sharpen your sticks, but the solutions you find together will be valuable contributions to the ongoing dialogues on the important topics you will discuss.

I look forward to receiving the outcomes of your conference.

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