



United Nations Association in Canada
Association canadienne pour les Nations Unies

**“A Conversation with the UN Secretary-General
on Urgent Global Challenges”**

Wednesday, 12 May 2010

Speaking notes for Kathryn White
Executive Director, UNA-Canada

Thank you, Allan. Mr. Secretary-General, members of the diplomatic corps, President of UNA-Canada Nancy Wildgoose, young scholars and civil society friends.

As you can imagine, it is an important day for Canada when the Secretary-General of the United Nations visits us in our capital city. It is especially important when he does so when there are so many issues of concern to Canada and the world that we share. As Allan mentioned, and everyone in this room knows, Canada is about to host the G8 and co-host the G20 in Muskoka and Toronto next month. It is clear that the UN Secretary-General has an important role to play in bringing both a broader agenda to these talks but also, through his offices, he brings the voices – a presence if you will – of those other countries not at that table. It is the Secretary General who can act as the bridge and who looks at economic sustainability through the important lens of the vulnerable in the countries not at those tables.

For those of you who don't know the United Nations Association in Canada, let me introduce you to us: UNA Canada is an historic Canadian institution only a few months younger than the UN itself. Marking Canadians' commitment to multilateralism, our UNA was one of the original founders of a global movement. Allan mentioned that I am, very proudly, the Chair of the World Federation of UNAs, of which there are over 100. The World Federation – whose President is Park Soo gil, a former leading diplomat and scholar from South Korea – is sometimes called 'the peoples movement for the UN.'

UNA-Canada is a registered charity whose mandate is to educate and engage Canadians on international issues of important to us all. As well as the professional presence in Ottawa, Toronto and Calgary, we take our strength from the 20 volunteer-driven branches from coast to coast to coast and from our many thousands of members – and I welcome members from UNAs around the country here today. (I hope you'll all become members too – pick up your programme or visit our web site for details!)

You would expect us to host and support model UN's – we do, with the world's largest bilingual model UN which this year we hosted in parallel to the Paralympics in Vancouver. UNA-Canada also stretches that empathy-based learning in creating a Model International Joint Commission that celebrated the 100th anniversary of the Boundary Water Treaty between Canada and the US last June. In October of this year we will host the inaugural Model Arctic Council in Whitehorse – some of our team is missing this important event today as they travel through some of the remote communities in the north from which we will bring young indigenous community members and others together learning - as we speak here today – about the MDGs and what they mean in their own lives.

You won't be surprised to know about our work with young scholars – and our UN internship programme. You might be surprised about our leading work on the social determinants of health – on intergenerational community engagement – of our award winning national programming on water and sanitation called “The Ripple Effect” - or our national and international programme using sport to teach the MDGs in Canada and with our African and Central American partners called “Sport in a Box”. “Sense of Belonging” an initiative to bring minorities to the table – to the Canadian commons - was another innovative programme bringing a global issue to Canadian communities – the largest anti-racism programme supported by the Government of Canada.

UNA-Canada, with a remarkable board and broad membership across the country, is also at the forefront of international issues on the UN's agenda. Whether convening leaders on issues of peace and security, the environment and human rights or adding a voice encouraging public engagement, focused on solution-seeking, we are a non-partisan organization that takes great pride in working relationships with governments throughout the 64 years of our history. This includes our relationships with Provincial and Territorial, as well as municipal governments. Our work is about partnership. I know you are interested in asking about the role of civil society – both in increasing the relationships with the UN – and in achieving the MDGs, Mr. Ban. One of the ways this can happen is when NGOs work to bring essential shared issues to a shared table. We are pleased to be doing so on many issues that Canadians care deeply about and welcome many of our partner organizations today – and those who are likewise striking partnerships on shared issues.

Which brings me to our partner and supporter in bringing all of you here in this magnificent setting: the International Development Research Centre. Thank you to David Malone and his team. You will be interested to know that tomorrow marks the 40th anniversary of the IDRC Act – another important Canadian institution focused on development solutions. Let me also thank my own team – and the Secretary General's team in bringing this to you – special thanks always to Joan Broughton and to Melissa Muluudi.

UNA-Canada, as you might expect, does survey Canadians and I can tell you that even through challenging times, when the United Nations itself is under global pressure, the support and aspirations for the institution may falter but doesn't waver. A Pew study of 27 countries – that I picked up from the head of the UN's Department of Public

Information when in New York a couple of weeks ago - showed Canadians' satisfaction with the United Nations at a whopping 70%. While not as strong as South Korea – no doubt much thanks to you – this is quite remarkable and will give you great confidence in your important meetings with members of Cabinet and the Prime Minister later today.

We know that the world is facing serious issues; that changes on a global scale – which you will no doubt share with us – are daunting. We know – and it is affirmed through your presence here with us today Mr. Secretary-General - that the support and engagement of civil society is not only key to progress and resolution – but it is the way forward in the countries struggling with large debt loads and lacking channels for participation. I know this is what has moved so many here this morning and I thank you all for shouting with your feet.

Before I return the podium to Chancellor Rock to introduce Mr. Ban – I would like to say to you Mr. Secretary-General that I have witnessed and heard of your commitment to the UN, its principles and work. We have seen your unflagging pushing of states to meet their commitments on the MDGs and other issues. I have noted your commitment to gender equality as foundational to development and prosperity and I am truly honoured to have you as our global guide.

Thank you.