



United Nations Association – UK
3 Whitehall Court, London SW1A 2EL

www.una.org.uk

Dear Secretary-General,

I am writing on behalf of the United Nations Association – UK (UNA-UK) to thank you for your tireless service as UN Secretary-General; for your outstanding achievements in the areas of sustainable development and climate change; and for the passion, warmth and deep commitment that you have brought to the office over the past decade. A short letter cannot do justice to 10 years in the hot seat, but we would like to pay tribute to some of the areas that we believe exemplify your tenure as Secretary-General.

The global environment has changed considerably since you first took office in 2007. The financial crisis and its aftermath, the Arab spring and its backlash, big power tensions, insular populist movements and growing public distrust in institutions and political leaders have all contributed to a much more difficult and dangerous climate – one that poses grave risks to our international system. At the same time the UN, even more crucial today than it was 70 years ago, remains over-stretched and underfunded, and lacking in sustained support from member states.

Despite these challenges, you persevered in pursuing your ambitious agenda for the world: pushing for the first truly global agreement on climate change and for a new set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that apply to all people, everywhere. Your description of us as the first generation that can end poverty and the last that can put an end to climate change eloquently captured the urgency of these challenges while also providing an incentive to act. It served as a great inspiration and rallying cry for our 20,000 members and supporters across the UK.

We commend your commitment to the world's most vulnerable people, and your efforts in galvanising the first World Humanitarian Summit and Summit for Refugees and Migrants. We commend your commitment to providing more opportunities for civil society, particularly young people, to engage meaningfully with the United Nations, including through the appointment of the first-ever Envoy on Youth, and the SDG consultations that reached millions of people. As co-founders of the *1 for 7 Billion* campaign to improve the selection process for your successor, we were especially delighted by your support for more transparency.

We commend you for the courage you have displayed in standing up for women's rights and LGBTI rights, and for speaking out in defence of UN principles on issues such as children in armed conflict, Western Sahara and Israel-Palestine. We respect you for taking responsibility for the UN's failings, by commissioning the report on Sri Lanka and initiating Human Rights up Front, for example, and by your recent apology for the UN's role in the Haiti cholera outbreak.

We are also grateful for your efforts to make the UN more visible and relatable by visiting more countries than your predecessors. UNA-UK was delighted to have hosted you on two occasions – in 2008 and in 2016, for our UN70 commemoration. We hope that these events demonstrated the depth of interest in, and support for, the United Nations that exists in the UK, even in these turbulent times.

As you acknowledged in your final speech to the General Assembly on 12 December, the past 10 years have not been easy. You have had to deal with member states seeking to frustrate modest management reforms at one end of the scale, and efforts to address the tragic situation in Syria at the other. But your personal story shows that when the UN works, it can achieve great things. This conviction has shone through your two terms in office, and we thank you for not wavering in bringing this message of hope to the public. Our members and supporters across the country are currently participating in a social media campaign called #ThankBan, and we have encouraged our UNA partners around the world to join in. We hope you enjoy reading their messages of thanks and support.

We wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Natalie Samarasinghe
Executive Director