

## **Habemus Ban Ki-Moon: Secretary or General?**

By Thorsten Benner

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BERLIN –

As the white smoke emerged from the chambers of the Security Council, it must have dawned on Ban Ki-Moon, the victorious South Korean candidate for UN Secretary-General, that in fact he won three jobs in one: that of the world's top diplomat, that of CEO of the world's most important and most troubled international bureaucracy and that of secular pope entrusted to preach and protect the values of the UN Charter.

His ability to combine and balance these roles and responsibilities will determine his legacy. The incoming Secretary-General would do well to learn from the experience of his predecessor. Kofi Annan paid dearly for neglecting the mundane tasks of leading and reforming the UN Secretariat after the highs of receiving the Nobel Peace Prize. For his successor Ki-Moon the lesson should be clear: While advancing the UN's work on peace and security, human rights and sustainable development, he should never lose sight of his daily responsibility to revitalize the ailing UN Secretariat.

Critics are already busily questioning whether the soft-spoken South Korean foreign minister is up to the job. Commentators portraying him as "colourless", "underwhelming" and without ideas could not be further off the mark. 40 years of public service and leadership in a country that managed to progress from a poor dictatorship to a prosperous democracy, extensive top diplomatic experience in dealing with one of the world's most dangerous conflicts, as well as the skills deepened in a mid-career program at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government are crucial assets that Ki-Moon can build upon in his new job. While the political horse-trading behind the scenes was certainly not pretty, Ki-Moon ran a highly skilful campaign in which he advocated the right approach for turning the UN into an effective, accountable and transparent global organization. He has promised to "reform the culture of the organization, increase accountability and toughen ethics". His call on member states to allow the Secretariat "greater flexibility matched by greater accountability" deserves to find support. His characterization of the US-UN love/hate relationship is as simple as it is to the point: "Global challenges call for global responses. The United States cannot do it alone. The United States needs the United Nations, and vice versa."

Ki-Moon's challenge now is to use the coming three months for an effective transition allowing him to get a head start when taking office in January. Here he should waste no time enlisting the help of a Deputy Secretary-General with expanded areas of authority. At the same time, he should announce that all senior appointments from now on will be based on an open, transparent and meritocratic search true to the almost forgotten ideals of "international public service". He should also push for the UN's notoriously fragmented development work to become more coherent and effective by adopting the "Four Ones": a single program, a single budget, a single evaluation and monitoring framework, and a single fully empowered resident coordinator for each country.

Ki-Moon is right on target when asserting that the "strategic focus should be more on achieving the goals already set rather than identifying new frontiers to conquer." In this spirit, he should confront all those who want to put the Millennium Development Goals back into

the drawer rather than making them the cornerstone of the UN's efforts in the coming decade. Here, Ki-Moon should continue Annan's highly successful policy of enlisting the support of business and civil society to promote sustainable development with the help of the Global Compact and other public-private partnerships.

He should lobby for strengthening the strategic and operational capacity of the UN's overstretched peacebuilding apparatus. With the same vigour as his predecessor, he should use the moral pulpit of his office to confront extremism, stand up for human rights and urge action against genocide and humanitarian emergencies. Most of all he should make one thing clear: That for the success of the organization it is of pivotal importance that the US, other Western powers and the G-77 cease their destructive new cold war within the UN. Whenever member states get carried away with their wrangling over power, prestige and pork, Ki-Moon should take the liberty of gently reminding them that the UN Charter starts with "We, the peoples", not "We, the parochial power holders". That way, member states will hopefully give the new Secretary-General a fair chance to prove right his optimistic credo that "the best days for our global organization have yet to come".

Thorsten Benner, author of the forthcoming *Crisis and Change: The UN Secretariat and the Quest for Accountability*, is associate director of the Global Public Policy Institute (GPPi) in Berlin.