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AHEAD OF LONDON SUMMIT, SECRETARY-GENERAL TELLS RELIGIOUS AND SECULAR LEADERS THAT

CONTRIBUTIONS OF ALL PEOPLE OF ALL BELIEFS NEEDED TO CONFRONT CLIMATE CHANGE

Following is the text of a message from UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to the dinner on the eve of the Summit of Religious and Secular Leaders on Climate Change in London (2 November), delivered on his behalf by Janos Pasztor, Director of the Secretary-General's Climate Change Support:

It is a pleasure to send my warm greetings to the religious and other leaders who have gathered in Windsor.

Dag Hammarskjöld once said, "The United Nations stands outside necessarily outside all confessions. But it is, nevertheless, an instrument of faith. As such, it is inspired by what unites, and not by what divides, the great religions of the world."

The values of tolerance and the equal worth of every human being are found in all the great faiths, in the UN Charter and in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. They are truly universal.

As a single human family, we face many common challenges. They can be confronted only if we draw on the contributions of all people of all beliefs. Today, climate change is at the top of that list. I have travelled to the melting Arctic and the burning forests of the Amazon. I have seen advancing deserts in Mongolia and drying lakebeds in Chad.

Those who say tackling climate change is too expensive are wrong. We will pay an unacceptable price if we do not act now. Climate change will put growing pressure on water, food and land. It will reverse years of development gains, exacerbate poverty, destabilize fragile States and topple Governments.

We must reduce the emissions that are causing climate change. We must help the most vulnerable adapt to changes that are already under way. We must jump-start a new era of global green growth. As spiritual guides, as community leaders, as people who can fight prejudice and open minds, you have an important role to play.

I count on your support now, in the final run-up to the UN climate change conference next month in Copenhagen, and beyond in bringing about the transformation we need to build a sustainable, equitable and peaceful world. Please accept my best wishes for a successful event.