



UNITED NATIONS

Secretary-General  
**Ban Ki-moon**

## **Seoul, Republic of Korea, 23 August 2013 - Secretary-General's remarks at event of the United Nations Academic Impact [As prepared]**

Thank you very much for this opportunity to address this important gathering.

In my travels around the world, I have taken planes, helicopters, boats, buses, motorcades and even bicycles. But the engine that drives my personal progress is education.

Without education, I would never be standing before you today. And I am resolved to advance the cause of education for all people. I am especially focused on helping the 57 million young children who are now out of school. Education will give them a better life – and give us all a brighter future.

This is especially true for girls. For every year that you educate a young woman, her income goes up by as much as 20 percent. A World Bank study of 100 developing countries found that putting more girls in high school significantly boosts per capita income growth.

I have personally seen how education transforms countries. I think I am not the only one here old enough to remember Korea when there were almost no modern conveniences. In our day, many people had no plumbing or electricity – forget about telephones or televisions. Back then, it would be difficult to imagine that such a poor country could become one of the world's most powerful economies.

People ask me the secret to Korea's amazing success. I never hesitate when I say: education.

I am grateful to you for devoting your lives to academia. I wish I had time to hear from each of you.

The Academic Impact was created so that you could systematically contribute to helping the United Nations advance peace and progress in our world.

There are many examples of our productive collaboration.

Tonight we will honour the winners of an essay contest sponsored by Handong Global University on the Millennium Development Goals and the post-2015 development agenda.

These twin issues are the highest priority for the United Nations. Progress on the MDGs can inspire the world to establish a strong set of universal sustainable development goals for the future we want.

We are drawing on the wisdom of people from around the world – development experts and government officials, but also grassroots groups, ordinary citizens, and students.

I am delighted to see so many members of Action by Students to Promote Innovation and Reform through Education, or “ASPIRE”. I applaud your activism.

Many of you come from universities that are using the Academic Impact to advance the UN’s goals. Students from Korea, Japan, Mexico, the Black Sea and Kazakhstan are engaged in this effort. They are encouraging entrepreneurship to help developing countries ... publishing research on the UN Charter ... teaching non-violence ... studying renewable resources and promoting sustainable development.

Around the world, universities are teaming up to support the global mission of the United Nations.

I urge you to do more to help the Academic Impact live up to its name and make a real difference in our world.

Last month, the United Nations was honoured to host Malala Yousafzai, the young teen who was shot in the head by the Taliban for exercising her right to go to school.

It was her birthday. We celebrated with the first-ever “Youth Takeover” of the United Nations. All the seats in the General Assembly Hall were filled with young people.

Malala called for a global struggle against illiteracy, poverty and terrorism. To win this fight, she said, “let us pick up our books and pens. They are our most powerful weapons.”

This brave and principled young woman nearly lost her life for this cause. I am confident that all of us can answer her call and promote education for a better future.

Thank you.