Secretary-General moved by UN Volunteer Blue Room talks

Shaping a sustainable future in the light of volunteering was the message of the evening as Secretary-General of the United Nations (UN), Ban Ki-moon and other dignitaries gathered at the World Conference Center on March 8th to celebrate the 20th anniversary of UN in Bonn.

"The UN Volunteers in more than 100 countries are offering the world skills in a huge
variety of fields. This is the United Nations by the people for the people!” Mr. Ban remarked. “People look to the United Nations to help ease their suffering and help them build a better future,” he added.

The event was attended by over 300 UN staff, German dignitaries and 38 UN Youth Volunteers, who had come to Bonn from seven countries to prepare for their volunteer assignments. Following this induction training, they will be deployed to 30 developing countries worldwide on March 11th.

Frank-Walter Steinmeier, the German Foreign Minister, commemorated the event by paying tribute to the work of 18 UN agencies based in the city. Following his speech, Mr. Ban acknowledged the recent achievements of the UN, namely the Agenda on Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. He duly recognized the commitment of the City of Bonn to climate change and environmental protection.

Among the other dignitaries who spoke at the event were Christiana Figueres, Executive Secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and current Chair of the Heads of UN Agencies in Germany; Richard Dictus, Executive Coordinator of the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme; and Alexander-Ashok Sridharan, Lord Mayor of the Federal City of Bonn.

While the stage was lit in the signature United Nations blue colour the audience had an opportunity to attend the “Blue Room talks” – a concept of UNV to highlight stories of volunteers in a TED-type talk.

Mr. Richard Dictus highlighted the principled response of the German government and the strong support of thousands of German citizens volunteering to support refugees. His remarks echoed the values of UNV, “to create as many volunteer opportunities in the UN system as possible in such a way that all citizens of all countries can find a way to contribute to the work of the United Nations.”

Volunteers help deal with humanitarian crises by offering a helping hand, by being active models of change, and by making important contributions with a particular focus on people in transition.

The Sustainable Development Goals and the role of volunteering took centre stage as three UN Volunteers participating in the “Blue Room talks” highlighted the importance of volunteer work in developing countries. Their inspiring experiences in Mongolia, Morocco and Serbia not only resonated with the audience but also provided impetus to further reinforce the value of volunteerism in sustainable development.

Mr. Ban’s concluding remarks from the German poet, Erich Kästner, “Es gibt nichts gutes, außer man tutes” (no good is achieved unless you do it) was a humble reminder to everyone in the audience and beyond of the significance of the UN and its mission.
Photo Gallery

Click here to see a photo gallery of the event.

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