

**TIME Global Health Summit
Guest Speaker
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Special Guest:
The Hon. Kofi Annan, Secretary-General, United Nations

At the TIME Global Health Summit, held in New York Nov. 1-3, TIME magazine convened leaders in medicine, government, business, public policy and the arts to develop actions and solutions to the world's health crises.

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OPERATOR: Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Jim Kelly.

JIM KELLY: Good morning.

It is my great pleasure to introduce our next guest. Kofi Annan is the seventh secretary general of the United Nations and the first one to be elected from the ranks of the U.N. staff. It is the fitting post for a man who has made equality, tolerance and human dignity his life's work.

In April 2000 Kofi Annan issued a millennium report entitled, "We the People, the Role of the United Nations in the Twenty-First Century". That report became the basis for the Millennium Declaration that has become a milestone to U.N. member nations defining a better planet.

In 2001 the secretary issued a five point call to action to address the HIV-AIDS epidemic. That same year the secretary general and the United Nations received the Nobel Peace Prize.

I'm very honored he has chosen to join us today. Please welcome Secretary General Kofi Annan.

KOFI ANNAN: Thank you very much. Thank you.

Thank you, David, and good morning, dear friends. I'm glad to have this opportunity to speak to you today.

Let me applaud the organizers of this three-day event, for bringing together such eminently express (ph) around some of the key health issues of our time, working to raise awareness and stimulate actions to be taken by all sectors of society, government civil society, the private sector, and academics.

Gatherings such as yours reflects a welcome understanding of the connection between human health and all the challenges facing us. That is something I have been deeply conscious of ever since I started my international career.

Some of you may not know that I first started my international career with the World Health Organization a long, long time ago, just about the time when the Salk vaccine was being introduced and 18 years before we were able to eliminate Smallpox and a full 20 years before the word AIDS and HIV entered our vocabulary.

But over the decades our connections between human health and development and security have become increasingly clear. At the last summit – World Summit in September, one thing that the leaders took away with was that you cannot have security without development and you cannot have development without security, and you can have neither if you do not respect human rights and the rule of law.

But at the same time, globalization has brought home to us that today's health challenges respect no boundaries. Governments everywhere have had to accept that every country is at risk.

In the past few months and weeks that realization has been rendered even more acute by the spread of the Avian Flu. Day by day, the alarm bells seem to ring louder as new outbreaks are reported in yet another part of the globe. The growing concern, this coupled with deep uncertainty, a sense upon certainty that makes it impossible to predict with any precision the future course of the disease, but not one that allows us to play down the risks.

We do not know yet whether the current strain of Avian Flu will cause a human pandemic, but we do know what a human pandemic is. We do know the tolls taken by the previous pandemics from the flu of 1917 and the AIDS crisis of our own time. We do know what happens when millions of people die and millions more are infected, when health systems are overburdened and overwhelmed, when families, communities and whole societies are devastated, when transport and trade, education and other services are disrupted or cease to function, when the economic and social progress of nations risks being reversed.

And whatever we may not know about the future course of H5N1, we do know this. Once human-to-human transmission has been established we would have only a matter of weeks to lock down the spread before it spins out of control. That is why the international community must take action now. We must rally around a set of priorities by handling this potential crisis and agree on measures to implement them. We must be honest and admit to ourselves that merely stockpiling antiviral medicines does not constitute a strategy to fight Avian Flu.

First, let me start by addressing the spread of the flu itself. We must invest more time to monitor and halt the spread that currently seems to be reaching new country almost everyday. That means strengthening that rate (ph) infrastructure that is currently under-funded so that disease outbreaks can be detected as source. And it means compensating farmyards and families fairly and properly for the calling (ph) of their (ph) best (ph), which for many of the communities around the world are a desperately important source of economic security. And if they are not compensated, they are not going to tell you when their birds are sick.

Second, we must help people accept that the current strain of Bird Flu challenges a way of life that has been with us for centuries, that (ph) are (ph) people living in close proximity with their animals. I myself come from Ghana, a country where families and their farmyard animals and children and chickens often coexist in a happy community, in one happy community. Hard as it will be, we must find ways to structure that coexistence or we will never be able to stop viruses migrating from animals to us and to our children.

Third, we must prepare for the impact of a human pandemic by identifying what is needed to keep communities and countries running should our fears materialize. And that means working through what may happen, developing contingency plans, and making advanced commitments, governmental and inter-governmental, on how we will keep essential services going, how transport – from transport to trade, from security to health services, and health systems themselves.

Fourth, we must work to ensure access to antiviral medicines for all those who will need them. That means exceptional efforts to scale up production. It means ensuring availability for people in the developing world who currently risk going without that. It means sharing the necessary signs and technology with those who have the required capacity to produce.

Fifth, we must ensure transparency and cooperation on science and research, especially in the development of vaccine. That means we must – that we must have as much openness as possible among governments in the sharing of specimens and information. It means of a common individual national interest in the work and to work collectively in our common cause. It means brokering scientific cooperation and harnessing global inventiveness and expertise on an unprecedented scale.

I was pleased to hear President Bush describe on Tuesday how the United States will make use of modern cell based technology in developing novel influenza vaccines.

Sixth, we must make full use of modern technology and culture to communicate vital facts about the virus and what people can do about it. If other pandemics have taught us anything, it is surely the lesson that silence is dead. That means using all channels at our disposal to disseminate information from radio and television to e-mail and mobile phone text messaging.

If I may quote Mike Leavitt, the U.S. Health Secretary, and I quote, “Flu is a networked enemy. We must fight it with a networked army. That is our challenge.”

Finally, we need political leadership and energy at the highest level. We need clear commitment from the top to ensure coordination and response and commitment. In response to each country’s crisis, every country must be involved, bringing all parts of government, civil society and the private sector together, working in partnership to deal with this crisis.

Already we have seen courageous leadership in many countries, triggering a number of promising national and regional initiatives, from the European Union to the African Union, from the ASEAN plus Three to the U.S. international partnership, which President Bush launched at the United Nations in September and outlined further on Tuesday.

The United Nations family is keen to work with all of these partners, not by imposing other structures but by supporting existing efforts and helping to ensure that they support each other.

In the United Nations itself we have set up a coordination mechanism, bringing together key players such as the World Health Organization, the Food and Agricultural Organization with the World Bank, and other development agencies. Our first mission is to track the crucial issues and trends, identify priorities, and encourage entities within and outside the system to work together. We will engage extensively with other stakeholders, including civil society and the private sector.

The U.N. system senior coordinator for Avian and human influenza, David Navarro, who is here with us today, will provide a point of contact for governments and interested parties. From my part, I shall keep myself closely informed and intervene if and when necessary. And I’m eagerly awaiting the outcome of next week’s planning meeting in Geneva on Avian and human pandemic influenza, which will be co-hosted by the World Health Organization, Food and Agricultural Organization, the World Bank, and the World Organization for Animal Health.

Ladies and gentlemen, dear friends, one can we know above all a threat like a flu pandemic cannot be addressed by one organization, one group of countries, one sector or one profession. It represents – it presents us with an extraordinary collective challenge, and it calls for an extraordinary collective effort to meet it.

When the flu does come we will be tested on our ability to work together, to provide assistance the majority of those at risk, including the most vulnerable. Stay alive and stay well. When the flu does come, that will be the test we must be sure to pass.

Let us prepare for it carefully and let us prepare for it now. I hope I can count on the support on all of you in that mission.

Thank you very much. Thank you. Thank you.

UNIDENTIFIED: Secretary General, we thank you very much for meeting with us. I know you have a busy schedule as well, but it's meaningful to all of us that you came here today.

There is one person who is conspicuously missing from the program, however. He's a leading voice from global health. He's – and a strident supporter of the world's poor. He's Bono. And I will admit, I'm a young kid (ph). I did not check U2's tour schedule when we picked this week to have the Global Health Summit. He's in Los Angeles. But he wanted to be here too. And thanks to the magic of videotape, which he made yesterday, he is going to be, ladies and gentlemen, Global Health's very own rock star, Bono.

BONO: Come in, New York. Come in, New York. I'm on the West Coast. I feel like I'm missing Woodstock. You're all there in the two-day rock festival in New York. I'm in the West Coast. It is really actually the Woodstock of Global Health, isn't it?

I mean, Jeff Sacks (ph) is Jimi Hendrix, isn't he, except this time he's going to set fire to himself instead of the guitar. President Lincoln – I'll have him singing the bands the night they drove old Dixie band. Bill Gates, you can sing Times They are a Change, Bob Dylan's classic. Actually, all (ph) him (ph) wasn't (ph) at (ph) Woodstock, was he?

But that doesn't matter because anyone who was there wouldn't remember anyway. Patty (ph) can be Joan Baez. I really am on the wrong coast and really am missing out on a whole lot.

The game changing is what's going on today, this convention, this issue of "TIME". I believe it's a game changer, not the usual talking shop. The fact that you have so many leaders from science, business, politics and media, churches and health clinics all at the same conference seeing (ph) roughly the same (ph) chair (ph) is a sign of how far we've come and how far we can go.

A world without malaria or TB is no longer unthinkable. In fact, it's right within reach. A world without AIDS and extreme poverty is suddenly imaginable, even, dare I say it, achievable. If you're not already persuaded by the moral imperatives to do this, I think you will be by the strategic and political imperatives. This isn't hope talking or faith. This is fact. This is hard science. Check the numbers will Bill Gates. He's good at numbers.

In the piece I wrote for "TIME" it dawned on me that biomedicine right now is where high tech was in the '90s. It's where the energy is, the excitement. It's just amazing what you see coming out of these research labs, a vaccine in the works that offers some real protection against death by a mosquito bite, malaria, two new vaccines for rotavirus, and today nearly a million people with HIV in poor countries are on lifesaving AOVs (ph), more than twice what it was 18 months ago.

The question now is not whether that scientists can show themselves smarter than these deadly diseases. We know that they are. The question is whether the rest of us will prove the equal of the scientists, whether we can make good on the promise of what they produce, whether we have the will to turn these ideas into action. If we're going to get these lifesaving drugs and vaccines to people who need them, it's going to take everyone. It's going to take the entrepreneurial spirit of business. It's going to take the attention of media, the commitment of church groups, the leadership of politicians. It's going to take real activism, but perhaps not from the usual suspects.

The status quo used to be assailed (ph) by rock stars and university students. It's much more afraid of business groups, church groups, soccer moms. Now when those same groups start hanging out with rock stars and student activists that's when politicians get really nervous.

And here's the good news. It's already happening. Nearly two million Americans are signed up for the One (ph) campaign to make poverty history. And I should thank some people on the panel who've been a part of that. By 2008 that's going to be five million people, which makes us bigger than the National Rifle Association, the NRA. That's madly good in my book.

So, the G8 – the G8, the hip-hop stars of international politics, you know, the ones with the bling, the G8 leaders have pledged \$50 billion more per year for poor countries. Half of it goes to Africa. The G8 have agreed to write off \$56 billion in old multi-lateral debt for 38 of the world's poorest countries. And the G8 have also agreed to get AIDS drugs not just to everyone who can afford them but to everyone who needs them. Good for the G8. It was a big year, big promises.

Guess what? We need more. But maybe even more importantly we need to make sure that these promises are kept. Politicians love to sign checks, but they're not looking (ph) on cashing them. We've got to keep the heat on them. We've got to give them hell. We also have to give them permission to spend what is, let's face it, a tiny fraction of our tax dollars on this stuff.

Tell them there's no better fight with waging because it's one we can win. Tell them this should be seen as an adventure, not a burden. There's no better reason for them to get up out of bed in the morning. No better reason for a rock star to get up out of bed in the morning. It's the truth.

All of us – this is exciting. This is the fight that defines who we are. Now more than ever we in the West surely need to show the rest of the world what we stand for as well as what we stand against. These issues, I believe, are our true grab for greatness. We are the generation, the first generation, that can look disease and extreme poverty in the eye, look across to Africa and elsewhere, say this and mean it. We have the power. We have the money. We have the technology to turn this around. We can change the world. Some say we can't afford to. I say we can't afford not to.

Anyway, thanks for listening to an Irish rock star. I don't know how a young pup like myself can close the main stage out to such great headliners. People are doing great work. So, from an amateur to the professionals, goodnight from New York, dude.

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