

Annan Has Farewell Message for US

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INDEPENDENCE, Missouri (CNN) -- Kofi Annan had some strong words Monday for the United States in his farewell speech as secretary-general of the United Nations.

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"As [Harry] Truman said, 'We must, once and for all, prove by our acts conclusively that right has might.' That's why this country has historically been in the vanguard of the global human rights movement," Annan said. (Watch Annan's relationship with the U.S. turn from friendly to frosty)

"But that lead can only be maintained if America remains true to its principles, including in the struggle against terrorism. When it appears to abandon its own ideas and objectives, its friends abroad are naturally troubled and confused."

Annan's successor, South Korean Ban Ki-Moon, will take office on January 1. Strain with Bush administration over Iraq

Annan on Monday admonished the United States to use its global supremacy judiciously, saying, "The U.S. has given the world an example of a democracy in which everyone, including the most powerful, is subject to legal restraint. Its current moment of world supremacy gives it a priceless opportunity to entrench the same principles at the global level.

"As Harry Truman said, 'We all have to recognize, no matter how great our strength, that we must deny ourselves the license to do always as we please.' States need to play by the rules toward each other as well as toward their own citizens.

"When power, especially military force, is used, the world will consider it legitimate only when convinced that it is being used for the right purpose, for broadly shared aims, in accordance with broadly accepted norms.

"No community anywhere suffers from too much rule of law; many do suffer from too little and the international community is among them," he added. "This we must change."

During his 10 years as U.N. secretary-general, Annan has had his differences with the United States, which originally backed his candidacy.

There were quarrels over finances with then-Sen. Jesse Helms, R-North Carolina, during the 1990s.

But his relationship with Washington became downright frosty during the Bush years as the Republican Party's more conservative wing took power.

Much of the strain has been due to the situation in Iraq. Annan strongly opposed the 2003 invasion by the U.S.-led coalition. He has called it an illegal war. Pleas on Darfur, climate change, trade

Annan's speech Monday was long on the principles of cooperation.

Referring to the shared responsibility of "working to make each other secure," he talked about "the murder, rape and starvation" in Darfur, the Sudanese region where the United Nations estimates up to 200,000 have died and more than 2 million have been displaced in fighting since 2003.

"The high-sounding doctrines like 'responsibility to protect' will remain pure rhetoric unless and until those with the power to intervene effectively -- by exerting political, economic or, in the last resort, military muscle -- are prepared to take the lead," he said.

He strongly urged an immediate response to climate change, without backing any specific initiatives or efforts. "We must do much more, and urgently, to prevent or slow down climate change," Annan said. "Every day that we do nothing, or too little, imposes higher costs on our children and our children's children."

He also challenged the United States to take steps to save the latest round of trade talks. "You Americans can make a crucial occurrence to many millions of poor people if you are prepared to save the Doha round of trade negotiations," he said. "You can do that by putting your broader national interest above some powerful sectional lobbies while challenging Europe and the large developing countries to do the same."

He also pressed for reform of the U.N. Security Council.

"The Security Council is not just another stage on which to act out national interests. It is the management committee, if you will, of our fledgling connective security system," he said.

Annan asked, "You Americans did so much, in the last century to build an effective multilateral system with the United Nations at its heart. Do you need it less today, and does it need you less, than 60 years ago?"

In conclusion, he answered, "More than ever today, Americans, like the rest of humanity, need a functioning global system through which the world's people can face global challenges together. And in order to function, the system still cries out for farsighted American leadership in the Truman tradition."