



May 12, 2010

Open Letter to Secretary General Ban Ki-moon

Dear Mr. Secretary General,

As you prepare to meet with various Canadian government ministers and Canada's Governor General, we are hand-delivering this open letter to voice strong opposition against Prime Minister Stephen Harper's campaign to secure a seat for Canada on the United Nations Security Council for the 2011-2012 term, until and unless there are 3 key policy reversals.

We ask you to consider the following examples of Canada not being in compliance with international norms and to consequently ask that you officially register our opposition to Canada's bid.

First, the Harper government must reverse Canada's long-standing opposition to the human right to water, a right it has rejected in votes at the Commission on Economic Social and Cultural Rights and in deliberations at the UN Human Rights Council. As you know, unsafe water and sanitation are the source of 85 per cent of all disease, and one in every six people on Earth has no access to clean drinking water. A UN covenant on the human right to water would clarify that it is a state's responsibility to provide sufficient, safe, accessible and affordable water to all of its citizens and Canada must recant its position as the strongest opponent to such a covenant.

Another clear example of the current Canadian government being opposed to broadly held international norms is continued opposition to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, ratified in September 2007. Canada, the US, Australia and New Zealand voted against the declaration, while 143 countries voted in favour. Since then, Australia has signed it, and New Zealand has indicated it supports this declaration. The Harper government has failed to act on the full and unbiased ratification and implementation of the Declaration at all levels of policy.

Finally, with respect to climate change, the Harper government calls for - with no supporting plans or legislation - a cut in emissions of 17 per cent below 2005 levels by 2020. When this is translated to the standard baseline year of 1990, the Harper target actually equates to a 2.5 percent increase over 1990 levels by 2020. As you know, climate science indicates much more is needed and climate justice requires developed countries such as Canada to take immediate action resulting in deep domestic cuts. The Council supports a target of at least a 40 per cent cut below 1990 levels by 2020. Canada has gone so far as to publicly state it has no intention of meeting its legally-binding commitments as a signatory to the Kyoto Accord.

For these reasons we believe that the Harper government should be denied in its bid for a Security Council seat.

It is our hope that our government will very soon join the many countries that have recognized the human right to water, the declaration on indigenous rights, and committed to needed emission cuts. Once it has taken these important steps forward, it would be much more deserving of the responsibility that comes with a UN Security Council seat.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Brent Patterson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Brent Patterson  
The Council of Canadians