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UN HONORS MEMORY OF FORMER SECRETARY-GENERAL BOUTROS BOUTROS-GHALI

PASSED away FEBRUARY 16 AT THE AGE OF 93

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USPA NEWS - The 193-member United Nations General Assembly, on February 18, honoured the memory of former Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, who passed away on February 18, at the age of 93, recalling his legacy in helping the world body find its footing in a new global landscape during the tumultuous...

The 193-member United Nations General Assembly, on February 18, honoured the memory of former Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, who passed away on February 18, at the age of 93, recalling his legacy in helping the world body find its footing in a new global landscape during the tumultuous early 1990s.

Addressing the Assembly's special tribute at UN Headquarters in New York, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said Mr. Boutros-Ghali had both the fortune and the misfortune to serve as the first post-Cold-War UN chief.

'While the United Nations was never as paralyzed during the Cold War as many have portrayed, the new dynamic gave the Organization new leeway to act. This brought promise and peril "" and Mr. Boutros-Ghali experienced both' Mr. Ban said.

Earlier on February 18, the Secretary-General presided over an opening ceremony in front of the Meditation Room at UN Headquarters, where he wrote a tribute to Mr. Boutros-Ghali in the Book of Condolences and then invited other dignitaries and guests to sign as well.

UN flags in all duty stations flown at half-mast on that day in the late Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali's honour.

At the General Assembly tribute, Mr. Ban recalled that in his very first month in office as the sixth Secretary-General of the world body, Mr. Boutros-Ghali presided over the first-ever Summit of the Security Council "" a powerful symbol of the will of world leaders to make greater use of the UN. Mr. Ban said that at the time, Mr. Boutros-Ghali told the assembled leaders: 'As the new era begins, it calls for both ideas and action to place international life on stronger foundations.'

Noting that Mr. Boutros-Ghali, building on his long career as a professor of international law, broke barriers as the first African and Arab Secretary-General of the UN, Mr. Ban stressed that he consistently gave voice to the poorest and least powerful members of the human family. He also steered the Organization through a series of world conferences on the environment, population, human rights, women's rights, social development and the unique challenges faced by the world's small island developing states, the UN chief said.

The sixth United Nations Secretary-General, his term was marked by brutal conflicts in Haiti, Somalia, Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia, among others. Soon after his inauguration, the Security Council met in its first-ever summit of Heads of State. At their request, Boutros-Ghali authored the report called 'An Agenda for Peace,' an analysis on ways to strengthen UN capacity for preventive diplomacy, peacemaking and peacekeeping.

'These global gatherings captured the imagination and gave the world exciting new policies, directions and purpose,' Mr. Ban said. 'The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that is our inspiring new template today owes much to the pioneering intellectual work of the 1990s,' he added.

Mr. Ban emphasized that the former Secretary-General also oversaw remarkable growth in peacekeeping. Mr. Boutros-Ghali's Agenda for Peace report made far-reaching proposals for fortifying this flagship UN activity, many of which have since become standard practice "" but many of which also remain unfulfilled.

During Mr. Boutros-Ghali's time in office, peacekeeping helped Cambodia, El Salvador, Mozambique and other countries emerge from

conflict. At the same time, engagements in the Balkans, Somalia and Rwanda highlighted the gap between the needs of a given situation and the material support and political unity required from the Member States, in particular the Security Council, Mr. Ban said.

'Here, too, the echoes resound and, indeed, haunt us to this very day,' Mr. Ban said.

Mr. Ban said the former Secretary-General pursued major restructuring efforts, managerial reforms and other steps that strengthened the UN. Mr. Ban highlighted in particular the former Secretary-General's report, "'An Agenda for Democratization,' for breaking new ground in emphasizing the links between peace, development and democracy at the national level "" as well as his calls for the democratization of the international system.

Noting that while the former Secretary-General won respect near and far, including as a leading Egyptian diplomat before joining the UN and, afterwards, as Secretary-General of La Francophonie, Mr. Ban emphasized that Mr. Boutros-Ghali never attempted to endear himself to everybody.

'Perhaps he was too direct for some; he might have been too professorial for others; some definitely found him too independent "" a goal that he considered among the highest virtues for any Secretary-General of the United Nations,' Mr. Ban said.

'No one could deny his commitment to our Organization. Throughout his service, he never relented in defending the United Nations and our Charter. As he said at the outset of his term, ""With all the convulsions in global society, only one power is left that can impose order on incipient chaos: it is the power of principles transcending changing perceptions of expediency,'" Mr. Ban added.

Speaking on behalf of the President of the General Assembly, Marlene Moses, the Permanent Representative of Nauru to the United Nations, said Mr. Boutros-Ghali had held office during a period of great change and great challenges. Taking over after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the former Secretary-General had worked relentlessly to reform the Organization and manage its response to appalling crises in Europe, Africa and beyond.

'Outcomes from major conferences during his tenure in Rio, Vienna, Beijing, and Cairo, together with his Agenda for Peace and Agenda for Development, can now be seen very clearly the heart of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,' she noted.

Also speaking at today's event were representatives from Swaziland, on behalf of the African States; India, on behalf of the Asia-Pacific States; Armenia, on behalf of the Eastern European States; Uruguay, on behalf of Latin American and Caribbean States; Liechtenstein, on behalf of the Western European and Other States; United States, on behalf of the host country; Lebanon, on behalf of the Arab States; and Egypt; as well as an observer from La Francophonie.

Source : The United Nations - on February 18, 2016

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