



The UN secretary-general Ban Ki-moon says his top hopes for 2013 are to reach a new agreement on climate change and to urgently end the increasingly deadly and divisive war in Syria.

The UN chief told the Associated Press that he's also hoping for progress in getting the global economy humming again, restarting Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations, promoting political solutions in Mali, Congo and the Central African Republic, and providing energy, food and water to all people.'

Ban laid out this ambitious wishlist in an interview before heading to the World Economic Forum in Davos this week, saying he plans to take "the uncommon opportunity" of being with 2,500 government, business and civil society leaders in the Swiss ski resort to exchange frank views on these issues.

"The world is now experiencing unprecedented challenges," Ban said.

"Climate change is fast happening – much, much faster than one would have expected," he said. "Climate and ecosystems are under growing strain."

Ban spoke before President Barack Obama, in his inaugural address Monday, put a similar emphasis on tackling climate change in his second term.

Two-decade-old UN climate talks have so-far failed in their goal of reducing the carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions that a vast majority of scientists says are warming the planet. In December, a UN climate conference in Doha, Qatar, agreed to extend the Kyoto protocol, a treaty that limits the greenhouse gas output of some rich countries, and affirmed a previous decision to adopt a new global climate pact by 2015.

"I will do my best to mobilise the political will and resources so that the member states can agree to a new legally binding global agreement on climate change," Ban said.

Ban urged progress in getting nations and people to use the world's limited resources without waste and in ways to ensure their replacement, so that all people will have enough to eat and drink and there will be electricity for their homes – and have energy to spare to promote economic growth.

"We have to have sustainable development," he said. "That's our number one priority together with climate change."

Momentum for fighting climate change has stalled amid recessions, financial meltdown and government debt crises of the past five years.

"At the same time, we need to see some economic dynamism," Ban said. "The world is still suffering, struggling to overcome its economic crisis."

The forum at Davos, opening Wednesday, focuses this year on how to ensure a more sturdy economic recovery that can withstand the kind of shocks the past few years have wrought – and includes closed-door panels on many of the things worrying Ban. Among the world leaders he may rub elbows with at Davos are Bill Gates, Christine Lagarde, Angela Merkel, David Cameron and Jacob Zuma.