



2013 sadly qualifies as a year of deterioration “beyond all imagination” with the ongoing [Syrian conflict](#) and the [Central African Republic \(CAR\)](#) crisis, as well as several other severe conflicts that still remain unsolved around the world.

In his end-of-year news conference, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon called on world leaders to follow the example of the late South African President [Nelson Mandela](#) in making 2014 the year of protecting people.

“I can think of nothing I would rather see in 2014 than for world leaders to emulate his example in upholding their moral and political responsibilities,” Mr. Ban said during the news conference at United Nations Headquarters in New York.

The Secretary-General devoted the first part of his opening statement to Syria, where over 100,000 people have been killed and 8 million driven from their homes, 2 million of them seeking refuge in neighbouring countries, since the conflict first erupted in March 2011.

“The [people of Syria](#) cannot afford another year, another month, even another day of brutality

and destruction,” he said. “We should all be deeply concerned by its findings that chemical weapons were used not only in the August attack in Ghouta area of Damascus, but on several other occasions, including against civilians, the UN chief said, adding: “2013 was the year in which the Syrian conflict deteriorated beyond all imagination.”

Turning to [CAR's descent](#) “into chaos” in 2013, Mr. Ban said: “I am gravely concerned about the imminent danger of mass atrocities. I call on the country’s transitional authorities to protect people. I appeal to religious and community leaders to prevent polarization.”

CAR has been thrown into turmoil since Séléka rebels launched attacks a year ago and forced President François Bozizé to flee in March. A transitional government has since been entrusted with restoring peace, but the transitional government is not functioning, Mr. Ban stressed.

Thousands of people have been killed and over 600,000 driven from their homes in a conflict that has become increasingly marked by inter-communal clashes between Christians and Moslem.

Luckily, 2013 was not a year of disasters alone. On the positive side of the balance sheet for 2013, the Secretary-General cited the “landmark” UN agreement on the [destruction](#) of Syria’s chemical weapons programme, the General Assembly’s adoption of the

[Arms Trade Treaty](#)

, Member States’ agreement on a roadmap for shaping the post-2015 development agenda, and the interim agreement between Iran and the Security Council’s five Permanent Members and Germany on Iran’s nuclear programme.

He also noted that peacekeeping and mediation promoted stability across the [Sahel](#) and West Africa, and the parallel political agreement signed last week between the Congolese Government and M23 rebels also figure among the successes of 2013.

“I want this diplomatic momentum to carry over into the New Year,” Mr. Ban declared. “We must make 2014 the year of protecting people - their security, their fundamental rights, their basic well-being.”