

EYE / PEOPLE

Ban Ki-moon Talks Global Citizenship, Life Among 'The Elders' and the Power of Sports to Ignite Change

Chiara Boni, Veronica and Anna Bulgari, Claudio del Vecchio and Chiara Ferragamo helped the American-Italian Cancer Foundation salute former Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and his wife Yoo Soon-taek with a lifetime achievement award.

By [Rosemary Feitelberg](#) on November 9, 2017



📷 Ban Ki-moon, Yoo Soon-Taek and Daniele Bodini
Tiffany Sage/BFA.com

Former Secretary General Ban Ki-moon knows better than most just how complicated the world really is — just ask his wife Yoo Soon-taek.

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“More and more complicated,” she said after Wednesday’s American-Italian Cancer Foundation gala. The career diplomat, who ended his term as the eighth Secretary-General at the end of last year, and his wife received a rousing thanks from the Mandarin Oriental crowd, as the recipients of the 2017 Alessandro Di Montezemolo Lifetime Achievement Award for their commitment to advancing public health. A champion of women’s rights and autism awareness, Yoo Soon-taek said, “I’m very humbled by this award. It’s a big honor for me. I didn’t do much for cancer.”

Veronica [Bulgari](#) thanked attendees which included benefit chair Chiara Boni, Claudia del Vecchio, Chiara Ferragamo, Anna [Bulgari](#), Wes Gordon, Prince Dimitri of Yugoslavia, Lamberto Andreotti and Alejandra Cicognani. Before dinner two breakthrough scientific researchers, Brunangelo Falini, M.D., and Peter Vogt, Ph.D., were honored with the Prize for Scientific Excellence.

In between gamely taking selfies with various guests, Ban Ki-moon chatted about what it’s like to be among The Elders, how he still misses the United Nations staffers and how national boundaries aren’t that important in the face of today’s technology.

WWD: What do you miss most about your old job?

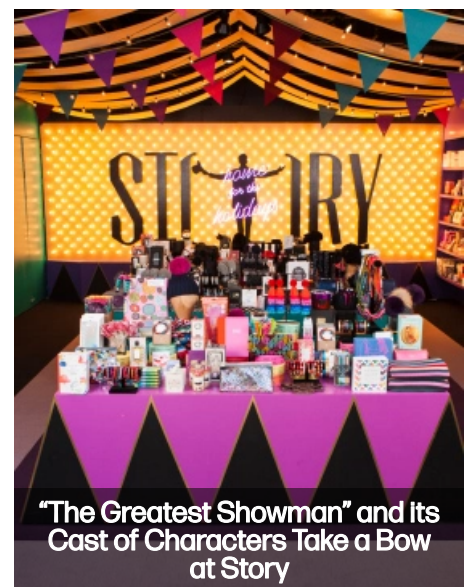
B.K.M.: I miss my friends from all the delegations. Of course, I have left many things unfinished. I’m sure that they are in the good hands of my successor the Secretary General António Guterres. What I miss is the atmosphere of the United Nations — all the friendship shown by heads of state, prime ministers and ambassadors — and the staff from the United Nations. I’m still thinking a lot about them. At the same time, I know that I have a different way of helping the United Nations move ahead with visions and priorities like the Sustainable Development Goals, climate change, gender empowerment. This is what I’m going to do through my center for global citizens and my center for Sustainable Development.

WWD: Where do you spend most of your time now?

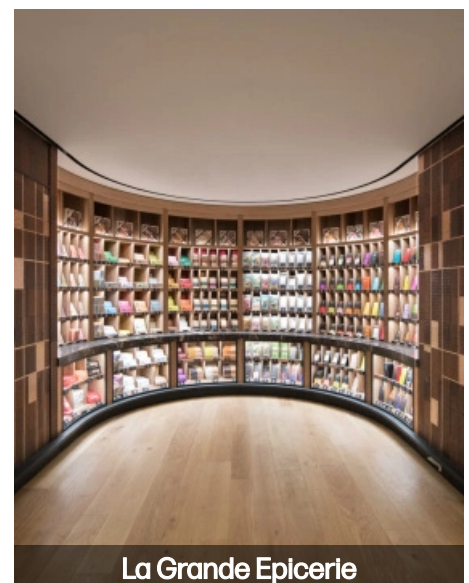
B.K.M.: I spend most of my time in South Korea but at least one-third of my time is spent traveling around the world, meeting people, speaking about climate change and sustainable



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development and trying to foster global citizenship especially for young people. What I observe is there clearly is a need for global citizenship. That is exactly right. We are having troubles around the world. We need global vision.

WWD: What do you think the most effective way of relaying that is?

B.K.M.: Education, quality education for young people so that they foster global citizenship. National boundaries these days are not [that] important because of transformative technological development. Now we are talking about the fourth industrial revolution.

WWD: Your wife once said you like action films. When you're not working what do you like to do?

B.K.M.: There are still many things for me to do. I have been quite busy for the last 10 months with these kinds of situations and engagement. I'm one of The Elders of the world, which was established by Nelson Mandela for very distinguished heads of state, global peace laureates. It is chaired by Kofi Annan, my predecessor. There are 12 such as Jimmy Carter, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Martti Ahtisaari, Graça Machel. We are working to help and address some conflict issues around the world. I'm also working as the chairman of the ethics commission of the International Olympic Committee.

WWD: That's no small feat. What's your favorite sport?

B.K.M.: Yes, it is. I am not a sports man but I like watching. As you know, when I was a Secretary-General, I initiated [the United Nations office] of Sport for Development and Peace. I appointed my special advisor for sports, Mr. Wilfried Lemke, to promote sports for development and peace, [succeeding] the former president of Switzerland, Adolf Ogi. Sports have instant power to mobilize spontaneous excitement, mobility and solidarity. So it helps the consolation of peace and harmony.



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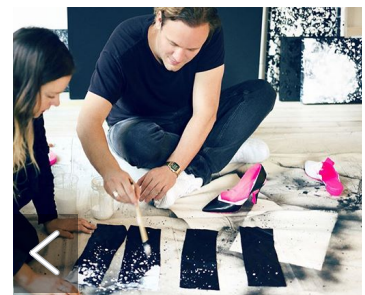


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