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The Process of World Integration: Alternative Vision of the Developing World

Speech by Former President FW de Klerk to Forum 2000, Prague

It is a great honour to be able to address this distinguished Forum in the final days of the old millennium.

As we approach the end of the century and the beginning of the new millennium, there are three realities which I think will continue to influence global affairs until deep into the next century:

- the first is globalisation;
- the second is the scourge of destitution - destitution arising from the failure of some parts of the world to join in the global march to prosperity; and
- the third is the persistence of devastating ethnic and religious conflicts.

The millennium is not just a nice round number: it in fact coincides with one of the most profound developments in human history, the process that we have come to call globalisation - or world integration.

During the past decades we have begun to lay the foundations of a new supranational global community. One of the central implications of this new community is that none of us - and particularly not the leading powers - can any longer ignore problems and grievances in distant countries. Non-performing economies cannot be ignored and relegated to a basket-case category outside of the mainstream of global commerce; and bloody crises and conflicts in distant societies deserve much more than mere thirty-second segments on the evening news.

In the new millennium it will be less and less possible to ignore the stark reality that a large part of the human population still lives in unacceptable poverty, misery and repression.

Some will argue that there has been progress, that the portion of the world's population living in absolute poverty has declined from two thirds to one third in the past forty years. However, fact is that the total number of people living below the poverty line has stayed about the same - because the world's population has doubled since 1960. Even more serious is the fact that the disparity per capita between the poorest and richest fifths of the world's nations has widened from 30 to 1 in 1960 to 78 to 1 in 1994.

In this regard, allow me, as an African, to put the case for Africa. Most of the poorest fifth of the world's nations live in Africa. In the race for peace and prosperity, many African countries are falling further and further behind the first world countries, as well as many other formerly developing economies. Aids is having a devastating effect on our continent.

Hunger and poverty thrive. Civil wars are wracking many countries. Ethnic cleansing is persisting.

And what is the rest of the world doing? More or less nothing! Here and there band-aids are applied, but there is no overall plan to systematically address the problems of Africa.

I want to issue a stern warning today: It will not be possible to marginalise an entire continent. Europe and the world cannot accept a new *de facto* apartheid between a rich white north and an impoverished and unstable black south in Africa. The population of Europe and Africa are now about the same, at around 750 million people. But within 50 years the population of Africa will have soared to two billion, while that of Europe will have shrunk to less than 640 million.

I want to warn that, in a shrinking world, the problems of one region will inevitably become the problems of other regions and ultimately of the whole world:

- Diseases like AIDS - which first appeared in Africa - do not observe international boundaries;
- Instability and poverty in one region will lead to problems for others. Already, we see this with the attempts of boat people from Haiti, Albania and Vietnam to penetrate the first world defences of the United States, Western Europe and Hong Kong.
- This year Western leaders have proclaimed a new doctrine concerning the morality of their intervention to protect the people of Kosovo from repression. But will the same moral principles be applied when intervention is urgently required to save Africans from repression, massacre or famine? If not, there will come a time of reckoning in respect of double standards.
- Whether we live in the first world or the third world, we all share the same global environment. The decimation of tropical forests and the extinction of animal and plant species will have long-term consequences for the whole planet.

In our globalised society such problems and conflicts will sooner or later breach international borders and affect the interests of us all. It is accordingly essential for us to develop the policies, the resources and the will to ensure that a sizeable proportion of the human population does not fall further behind in the global race for prosperity, peace and democracy.

How then should we deal with these problems? In the time allowed I can only highlight a few guidelines.

The solution to many of these problems firstly lies in rapid and sustained economic growth. Secondly it lies in the promotion of democracy and the role of civil society. And thirdly it lies in recognising the symbiosis between these challenges. Economic prosperity creates the environment in which democracy and free institutions can grow - and they, in turn, help to promote the stability which is essential for economic growth.

There is an undeniable link between peace, development, growth and democracy. Only three of the countries in the world with per capita incomes of less than US \$ 1,000 are full democracies, while nearly all of the twenty richest countries - those with per capita incomes above US \$ 13 000 - are democracies (the exceptions being a number of oil-rich states). This should not come as a surprise: it is difficult for democracy to take root in countries

with low levels of education; inadequate social services and poor communications. On the other hand, it is almost impossible to develop a successful consumer economy without a well-educated population; free institutions; the liberty of action and choice that free markets require; and effective mass communications.

There is also a link between levels of development and peace. Eleven of the thirty poorest countries - including Rwanda, Burundi, Afghanistan, Sudan, Liberia, Somalia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo - have in recent years been wracked by devastating civil wars. On the other hand, none of the twenty richest countries have experienced serious internal conflict - with the exception of Northern Ireland.

Again, there is reason for this. The poorest countries have not yet developed the constitutional mechanisms to manage and resolve conflicts. Those involved in such conflicts, have little ability to choose or control their destinies, but are simply swept along by the tide of war. Citizens of rich first world societies are, by contrast, well-informed about current issues; they are protected by the law and, through their political representation, are able to choose whether they wish to become involved in conflict or not. Only in the most extreme cases will they accept the necessity for war. Moreover, every aspect of modern conflict is covered on a minute to minute by the media. Under these circumstances it is difficult to romanticise war. It is perhaps for such reasons that there is no case where one true democracy has ever gone to war against another. Democracy is thus a strong force for peace.

How then can we achieve this symbiosis between economic development, stability, democracy and a vibrant civil society? Once again I only have time for a few guidelines.

In the sphere of the economy, the developed countries can help to promote economic growth in Africa and other least developed societies by helping to remove some of the obstacles which at present hobble their economies. In particular, further attention should be given to the alleviation of the debt burden of the world's 41 highly indebted poor countries - 34 of which are in Africa. The cost to Africa of servicing its foreign debt of US\$ 349 billion in 1997 amounted to 21.3% of its earnings from the export of goods and services. Fortunately, significant steps are now being taken by the IMF to address this problem. So far four countries, including Uganda and Mozambique, have received about \$5.5 billion in debt service relief, and six more are in the pipeline to qualify for another \$3.4 billion.

Steps should also be taken to increase Africa's diminishing share in global trade - which is less than 2% of the total. African exports need more favourable access to first world markets and consideration should be given to counter the increasingly negative terms of trade which most African countries experience. Africa also requires higher levels of foreign and domestic investment to achieve the 5% per annum growth levels which are necessary to break out of the grip of poverty.

At the root of this failure to attract investment, is the chronic instability in so many countries in sub-Saharan Africa. The sad reality is that twenty of the 45 countries of these countries are presently - or have recently - been involved in wars. Some of these conflicts have been characterised by unspeakable and meaningless brutality - such as the deliberate mutilation of more than 5 000 people in Sierra Leone. After decades of fighting, others - such as the conflicts in Angola, Sudan and Somalia - continue to defy all attempts to find solutions.

I believe that if we are to find solutions, we will have to go to the root of the problem.

The simple truth is that one of the main causes of conflict in Africa - and elsewhere in the world - lies in the inability of different ethnic and cultural groups to coexist peacefully within the same societies.

History has, rightly or wrongly, thrown peoples, nations and ethnic groups together who do not want to be together. Borders have been drawn arbitrarily. And the result, here on the threshold to a new millennium, is widespread inter-communal conflict - not only in Africa but throughout the world. The present or recent conflicts in the former Yugoslavia, southern Asia, Rwanda, Burundi, Sri Lanka, East Timor and Kashmir all bear bloody testimony to this fact.

This, apart from the need for economic development, is the great challenge of the new millennium:

How to defuse the conflict potential inherent in multi-cultural and multi-ethnic societies.

In a shrinking world, the international community will have to pay far greater attention to this question than has thus far been the case. It is a sensitive question because some 90% of all states include some or other significant cultural or ethnic minority and few would welcome international scrutiny of such relationships.

These sensitivities do not, however, detract from the urgency of the problem, nor from the need for more intense international debate.

For example, we need to address the question of the point at which communities which constitute clear majorities in definable geographic areas have the right to secede. Is there such a right? Evidently, it was accepted in the case of Slovakia and more recently in the case of Kosovo. It probably would be accepted in the case of Quebec, but what would the position be if the Inuit - the native inhabitants of much of the north of Canada - wished to establish their own state, or if the Navajo were to decide to do so in their homeland in the south-western United States? What of Chechnya and Dagestan? What of Tibet? Or is all this more a question of real-politik than principle?

And what of those different cultural and ethnic communities which remain within the same state? What cultural, linguistic and educational rights should they enjoy? How should they be represented in the processes by which they are governed and what mechanisms should be created to ensure cordial relations between communities? These are also uncomfortable questions - but they are questions which must be debated.

My country, South Africa, has a great deal of experience in dealing with intractable ethnic disputes. Until ten years ago, we were involved in a seemingly hopeless downward spiral of conflict and repression. Yet, to the surprise of the world - and sometimes to our own surprise - we managed to pull back from the abyss and resolve our long-standing differences through peaceful negotiations.

How did we achieve this? And can our experience help other divided societies to solve their problems peacefully? I believe it can and want to share with you a few thoughts about the lessons we have learnt.

- We accepted that in complex societies all cultural communities should be given maximum "breathing space" to promote their identities and to cherish their traditions.

- A culture of toleration and pride in diversity should be cultivated. In multicultural societies, mutual respect and pride in the diversity of national cultures should be fostered through the education system, through the teaching of national languages and through the media.
- Multicultural societies, should also wherever possible strive for inclusivity. Simple majoritarianism, where significant minorities can be excluded from important processes of decision making should be avoided. All communities should feel that they are adequately represented in all of the institutions through which they are governed; that their bona fide concerns are receiving adequate and sympathetic consideration by those in power. Special care should be taken that no community feels isolated or alienated from the governmental process.
- Furthermore, provisions in the Constitution prohibiting discrimination of any form should be strictly enforced. No community should feel victimised or excluded from any aspect of national life because of its cultural or ethnic identity.
- Finally, there should be a concerted effort to establish an inclusive, overarching national identity which can unite all the people, irrespective of their differences. Common national values, based on those in the Constitution, and common goals from which all can benefit, should form the framework for such a new national identity. In this process, common symbols and pride in national achievements should be propagated.

One of the main things that we have learned is that relationships between communities in complex states - like all human relationships - require constant an ongoing attention and care. Communities must communicate and become engaged with one another in addressing common problems and in promoting mutual understanding. Constitutional rules and conventions governing the rights and relationships between communities need to be strengthened and observed.

It was with such objectives in mind that I established a foundation earlier this year to work for peace in divided societies, to promote democracy in Africa and to make a contribution to the resolution of ongoing conflicts.

As we approach the end of the millennium

- We will have to accept the implications of globalisation.
- We will have to accept that no part of the global community can be marginalised. We cannot tolerate a situation in which a part of the world's population races forward to ever greater material prosperity and social well-being while another part continues to languish in poverty, conflict and despair.
- And we will have to work at ways of ensuring that people from different cultures can co-exist peacefully within the same societies and within our shrinking global village.

The past century has witnessed unprecedented human progress. The great challenge that lies ahead of us will be to ensure that when the next century closes, all of mankind will share in the prosperity, peace and freedom that only some of us presently enjoy.