



FOREIGN POLICY ASSOCIATION

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Annual Dinner 2006
May 18, 2006

Featuring:

**H.E. Jan Eliasson, Foreign Minister of Sweden and
President of the 60th session of the United Nations General Assembly**

MR. TONY TEN KENG YAM: — When Friar Lorenzo is telling Romeo, when he thinks that he will forever leave Juliet, and Friar Lorenzo in his pragmatic way says, “Romeo, remember, there is a world outside Verona.” There is a world outside Verona, and you by joining the Foreign Policy Association, and by coming here tonight, you as representatives of the most powerful country in the world, I would say modern day Rome, you might not say that there is a world outside of Verona. And that is perhaps one of the most important things that we have to realize in today's world, that there is a world outside Verona. And that we, whether we are large nations or small nations, have our future to put in the hands of whether we will come to the conclusion that good international cooperation is a national interest. We have to go that road to come to the conclusion that good international cooperation is a national interest.

I used to work for a Prime Minister who always said, “You know, for Sweden, a medium sized small nation, a strong United Nations, a strong belief in international structures, international law, is our first line of defense.” That was pretty strong stuff; everybody liked that statement in Sweden except the Swedish Minister of Defense. But I would say today, it doesn't matter whether you are a large nation or a small nation. If you look at today's problems, you simply cannot make a distinction between what is international and national. Foreign policy used to be there, domestic policy used to be there in the 60s and 70s when I started my life in diplomacy and international relations, but that's not true today. That borderline is

gone. Look at any problem: migration, no, it shouldn't be a problem. Issues, challenges: migration, environmental problems, communicable diseases, trafficking. Name any of these problems and ask yourself what is national and international about these issues? The borderline is gone. We have to realize that the issues that we have to deal with at home are international, and those that are dealing with the international issues have to understand that they also have a national component. That is new. And what is then the paradox that we live in? And I speak, now from my experience in the United Nations in the last year. The paradox that we live in today's world, in my view, is that on the one hand, we have never realized, isn't that true, that we have never earlier been in greater need of international solutions to all the pressing issues that are around us. I have never felt more strongly that urge, that need, but, and here comes the paradox: I can't recall a more difficult period to bring about these changes. There is so much suspicion, so much mistrust, and in the day and age of fast globalization, many countries, many people inside our countries, consider the outside world more and more as a threat, as a peril, rather than as a promise and a potential. And what happens in this world if globalization is seen as something that you want to defend yourself against? What you do is you build walls: protectionism, you build political walls: isolationism and you build up biases and prejudices which makes very murky waters for different political groupings. The outside world gets the jobs, that's where crime comes from, et cetera, et cetera, and if we have a world where we come to the conclusion that the outside world is a threat, in today's world, then we are in real trouble. So, this work that we are onto now, several of our colleagues here tonight from the UN, of reforming this organization, which is in such bad shape in public opinion, not least in the United States, is one of the most crucial tasks that anyone can face right now. Because if we can't prove that international cooperation is the right thing to do, and openness and free movement of people and ideas are what we are in for, tolerance and openness. If we go that direction we might make it, but if we don't I would say we are in for one of the most somber periods in modern history. That is why there is so much at stake now, to prove that international solutions are the ones we need to go for. And of course what is most important is that this realization is coming home here, in this country, the most powerful country in the world, that we can prove that the world together, is more powerful than the world alone.

It was difficult the last few years. Iraq divided the membership of the United Nations, it divided, by the way, us and Europe also, as the European common security and foreign policy was in very bad shape because of the Iraq issue, but this organization, the United Nations was also very strongly hurt. Then we have of course, the oil-for-food issue which made a tremendous impact in not least the United States, and rightly so, I mean we need to really draw consequences from that, but I still claim that there is so much more to the United Nations. Afghanistan is a difficult place to be in right now, but still 60 nations are there side-by-side on the basis of a Security Council resolution, or two, a couple of them. In Liberia a woman, a woman, became president, a country that could have been a failed

stated, 15,000 peacekeepers are there, and the elections were supervised by UN; it is now a forgotten story. And every day, every day, UN workers are helping to fight malaria. Every 30 seconds a child dies in Africa out of malaria. Fighting AIDS, dealing with orphans, getting clean water to the beginning of a project which should give 300 million people south of the Sahara clean water. 1.2 billion people. If I had a glass of water, my colleagues would know that I would raise that glass of water and say "This is a luxury. That which you have in front of you is a luxury for 1.2 billion people in the world." We talked at our table the two things that are most needed today are to get clean water. What a tremendous effect on maternal mortality, child mortality, the health situation in the world. The second thing we need, and I was reminded, I see your eyes now, he's telling me, the second thing we need is to give girls education. Girls who are educated will educate their children. Girls who are educated in Africa, have a 20% or 30% chance of getting AIDS, as compared to 60 to 70 in South Africa, I think, for those who don't have education. So here we are, dealing with these issues together, and if we do not deal with these issues together, we are in very very bad shape.

Now, where does this bring us? We are in the most important project, namely to reform this organization, and we have embarked upon the most ambitious reform project in the history of the United Nations. It was a bit of a gamble by Kofi Annan, my dear friend, the Secretary General to go for such an ambitious reform proposal. My predecessor continued, and my colleagues all at this table, kept the pace. And now we are in for a period of trying to see whether we can continue to reform this organization. We have done a few good things. I would say we've done two or three qualitative jumps forward for the UN. One is a very simple thing, you know that in natural disasters, and I was the Emergency Relief Coordinator back in the early 90s, Jean-Marc de la Sabliere worked together on those issues, people die the first 64 hours in natural disasters. We have for years and years done the humiliating thing to ask for money while they are dying, more or less. Do we have enough money to send in helicopters to South Asia? Now we have a fund of \$ 250 million, soon to be, hopefully, half a billion dollars which will make it possible for us to immediately send in everything we need to those areas that are affected. Qualitative step forward.

Secondly, peace-building. The Peace-Building Commission. Why do we leave the disaster areas when the CNN cameras disappear? Afghanistan, case in point, Somalia, I think also. Now we are going to do reconstruction, development, setting up institutions, reconciliation processes, so that the conflicts don't erupt again. In twenty percent of the cases, sorry, in fifty percent of the cases, in fifty percent of the cases of conflicts that ended during the last twenty years, they erupt again because we don't do this reconstruction, development, institution-building, and reconciliation. Now we have a program, starting, hopefully, before the end of this session in one of the African countries.

And then I am very very proud, although some people are not that happy about it, I think the fact that we got a Human Rights Council was extremely important. It wasn't the perfect construction, but I would say that if we had not made it in these negotiations that were getting out day and night for five weeks, in February and March. If we had not made it in these negotiations, I am pretty sure that we would still be sitting in negotiations, maybe a year from now, we would still be sitting in negotiations and we could easily have made human rights, a north-south issue. Human rights, something imposed upon, not least in the Islamic world. Remember the Islamic crisis in February/March, and human rights could have been far away from Eleanor Roosevelt's Universal Declaration and the Bill of Rights and the whole idea that dignity of man is something that is shared universally as a value. And for me, if we had lost that, that's why I was driven by something, I don't know it was hard working conditions, it was six weeks and I tried to keep a straight face, but I was driven by the fact that if we hadn't made it, we would have lost the soul of the United Nations. If the UN doesn't make a difference for a human being who is in need, who is poor, who is sick, who is oppressed, then we lose the soul of this organization, and I am so glad that you were on the side of this negotiation. And even if the US chose not to vote in favor of this resolution, I was glad to hear from Condoleezza Rice personally in a phone call from Australia that yes the US would support it, the US would fund it, and the US would, in all likelihood, run next year; that we look forward to. But anyways, these were the three achievements that I think we should be proud of now.

We have a very difficult time ahead. We have to reform the United Nations as an organization. It has to be stream-lined. It is hard with 191 nations and everyone wants to control the budget, and to have a strong Secretary General is something we say, but there is a lot of micromanagement done, and he is rightly complaining about that. And to find that balance is very difficult, and what I would hate to see is that if making the UN a more stream-lined, modern organization would be an issue that is, let's say an American agenda, then that is wrong, because a good and strong UN is in the interest of everybody. And then we have to do more about development and economic and social issues. The three pillars of the UN, in my view, is security, development, and human rights. Without security, no development. Without development, no security. And without respect of human rights, without respect for the dignity of man, none of the above. Without respect of human rights, no lasting security and no lasting development. That is the model and therefore, we desperately need to move on development. I was just in Nairobi two weeks ago, and I saw the slums outside of Nairobi in Kibera, talking about the lack of water and sanitation, the most shocking conditions. And if we don't realize that we have to do something about those conditions, we are all in trouble. And I therefore hope that we will be able to move to these Millennium Development Goals. I always carry two things in my pocket: I carry the UN Charter, "We the People" and all this, and the other, this little thing, which are the eight points for

the Millennium Development Goals, and one of themes by the way is to get clean water and another one is for girls' education.

So we have a lot of things left to do and in closing, I would say that in order to do this, we can't do it as a sort of UN structure organization to which we can point and say, "Please do it." The United Nations is not the universal medicine. Universal medicines don't exist in today's world. We have to do it, work together. That panacea, that universal cure, is not coming from the UN; the UN can be the catalyst for all of us. The UN is us, the UN is a mirror in reflection of the world, but we need to mobilize all actors today with the aspiration and aim, in my view, that making effective international cooperation is a national interest and that requires us to mobilize not only the UN system and work out an effective system. We also need to get the regional organizations like the European Union to be a powerful actor and take responsibilities, the African Union in Africa, the corporate world, the private sector. So many people I meet in the private sector, from the Ikea representative tonight is a wonderful representative of that social conscience, that desire to play a role outside of the interest of the company, and that desire should be drawn upon. There is a tremendous energy, a tremendous power and talent in that private sector that should be used, and not least in this country. And then of course civil society, the churches, all these organizations that carry this message that there is a world outside Verona. So it is time for mobilization, and it is time for the international division of labor, where we all take responsibility; the United Nations representing that universal value, the universal values, the solidarity, the need for international cooperation, but also that other actors have responsibilities; that is what we need to do right now, and if the United States is on board for this we will have much more energy into, not only the United Nations, but also in the whole multilateral system that we have to develop to prove that the world together is stronger than the world alone.

I will end on a very personal note. Seeing that there are two words that Bill and Wendy Luers let me use with the young people today; I feel inspired by you, and I feel equally inspired by the young people here tonight. The UN General Assembly was probably full of two thousand kids, high school kids with the UN Model exercise in front of them, and I said to them, "There are two words that are so important for us and those are: passion and compassion." Nothing happens in life without passion, on all levels, I guess, but of course if you don't have compassion the wrong things happen, so passion and compassion in combination. Then I ventured also with those young students today to try to remember a quote from Bertrand Russell who in his autobiography wrote a prologue which remained with me from the first moment I read it, I was 26, 1966, I've already disclosed my age, and he wrote at age 85, looking back at his life, after life as a scientist, a philosopher, a peace activist, three marriages, and he wrote in this prologue, the following in the first paragraph: three passions, simple but overwhelmingly strong,

have governed my life: the longing for love, the search for knowledge, and an unbearable pity for the suffering of mankind. These passions, like great winds, have blown me hither and thither, in a wayward course, over an ocean of anguish, sometimes driving to the verge of despair.” Now let's go for the longing for love, let's go for the search for knowledge, listen Joanna, and let's go for the unbearable pity for the suffering of mankind, but let's forget about the anguish and let's forget about the despair and go with determination and make sure that we prove that the world together is stronger than the world alone. Thank you very much.