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FOUNDATION

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FW DE KLERK
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MULTICULTURALISM AND GLOBAL POLITICAL CHALLENGES

Your Royal Highnesses, Fellow Nobel Peace Laureates, Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen...

One of the inescapable implications of globalisation is an enormous increase in the interaction between people from different backgrounds, cultures, languages and religions. The management of the resulting cultural, language and religious diversity will be one of this century's greatest challenges.

Throughout the world populations are becoming more cosmopolitan: the world's 200 countries now include more than 6 000 different cultural communities. More than 130 countries have cultural minorities comprising more than 10% of their populations.

As we see almost every day in the TV news, cultural diversity is being augmented by new waves of migrants seeking economic opportunities and freedom. Everywhere people are on the move - and everywhere they are confronting once homogenous societies with new challenges.

The inability of countries to manage diversity has now become by far the greatest source of conflict in the world. The simple reality is that in the 21st century, the main threat to peace no longer comes from wars between countries: it comes from the growing threat of conflict within countries between ethnic, cultural and religious communities.

Nearly all the world's conflicts have their roots in the inability of countries to manage diversity. Examples include the recent civil war in Sri Lanka between Tamils and Sri Lankans; the ongoing tensions between Israelis and Palestinians; conflicts involving the Kurdish minorities in Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Iran; continuing ethnic warfare in South Sudan and Darfur; recent conflicts in the Ivory Coast and Mali; recurrent tensions between Muslims and Christians in Nigeria. Chechnya, Dagestan, Georgia, Kashmir and the Philippines have recently - or are still - experiencing ethnic or religious conflicts. The current civil war in Syria is being seriously exacerbated by long-standing tensions between fundamentalists, Shi'ites, Alawites, Kurds and Christians.

The preservation of cultural diversity is also one of the central issues in the debate on where globalisation is leading us. Many people believe that the identity, purpose and dignity that they derive from their cultural heritage are being threatened by the global tidal wave of English-language mass culture. The pervasive media, entertainment and communication



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influences that its broadcasts are brashly consumerist and often respect few boundaries or traditional values.

South Africa - which is one of the most multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-linguistic societies in the world - has plenty of experience in managing - and mismanaging - diversity. Our population comprises

- 80% black South Africans with nine ethnic groups - each speaking its own language - but increasingly conversant in English;
- 9% Coloured South Africans - most of whom still speak Afrikaans - but who also include a strong Muslim community descended from Indonesians who were brought to the Cape by the Dutch East India Company;
- 2% Indian South Africans - including Muslims and Hindus - most of whom speak English as their home language;
- 9% white South Africans - including my own community, the Afrikaners, who speak Afrikaans and white English-speaking South Africans.

Our population also includes anywhere between two and five million refugees from the rest of Africa - most of whom are illegally in the country.

One of our main goals during our constitutional negotiations between 1990 and 1996 was to accommodate these widely diverse communities. Ultimately, our new Constitution made full provision for the protection of cultural, religious and language rights:

- It recognised our 11 official languages and proclaimed that they should enjoy parity of esteem.
- it required us to strive for unity within our diversity.
- It guaranteed freedom of religion and belief.
- It prohibited discrimination, *inter alia*, on the basis of race, religion, language and culture.
- It enjoined the State to take special action to develop our indigenous languages.
- It stated that government at national and provincial levels must use at least two official languages.
- it recognised the right to receive education in the language of one's choice in public educational institutions, where such education is reasonably practicable.
- People belonging to cultural, religious and ethnic communities would be able to enjoy their culture, practise their religion and use their language.

One of the central goals of the FW de Klerk Foundation is to monitor the manner in which the state respects these rights in practice - and to promote and defend the cultural and language rights of all our communities.

The accommodation of diverse immigrant groups has also become one of the most controversial issues in Europe. It has played a decisive role in recent European elections. It



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has led to ugly reaction and riots and was a major factor in the British decision two years ago to leave the European Union. For a number of countries, the arrival of indeterminate numbers of refugees is creating unsustainable human, political and logistic problems.

The European Union is confronted by the challenge of striking a balance between core humanitarian values and political reaction. It must also take into consideration the need to facilitate the immigration of sorely-needed skilled workers - necessitated by the expected decline of its workforce by 20 million people by 2030.

Immigration and demographics also played a central role in the 2016 election of President Donald Trump. Trump supporters fear that the traditional European-descended dominance of the United States is under threat from changing demographics - and particularly from the emergence of Hispanic Americans as the country's largest ethnic minority.

Hispanics will include more than 100 million people - or one in four Americans - by 2050. Already they make up more than a third of the populations of Texas and California and more than 40% of the population of New Mexico. But should they accept the convention that all migrants should eventually become English-speaking - or will the United States increasingly have to accept bilingualism and multi-lingualism?

As we in South Africa have discovered, the answer to diversity is not secession, partition and devising ways to enable communities to live apart. It is to adopt approaches and to establish norms that will enable different cultural and ethnic communities to live together peacefully and in mutual respect within the same States.

If the international community really wants to promote harmony and peaceful coexistence in multicultural and multi-religious states, it must reach broad agreement on the rights that cultural, religious and ethnic communities should enjoy. We need to do much more to define and protect the rights of these communities throughout the world:

- We need to adopt stronger international conventions to recognise and protect the rights of cultural, religious and language minorities, just as we have already done for individual political and civil rights.
- We need to promote acceptance of the role that education can and must play in the preservation of religious, cultural and language diversity. We also need to establish the principle that states have a duty to support and finance such education.
- We need to develop overarching common values based on toleration and respect for the rights of all individuals and communities.
- We need to measure the behaviour of governments against these norms. If we do so, I am confident that we will soon discover that the societies that are the worst afflicted by inter-communal violence are also those that have the least respect for the rights of their constituent communities.



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Here, I would like to congratulate the Kingdom of Bahrain on the manner in which it is promoting and nurturing religious toleration and understanding. I have been told that within one square kilometer in Manama it is possible to find Sunni and Shia mosques, Hindu temples, churches and a synagogue.

I have also been informed about the policy of His Royal Highness the Prime Minister to ensure that communities with distinct cultural, language and religious identities are able to coexist peacefully in harmony under the full protection of the State.

However, the challenge of multiculturalism is not the only challenge that confronts the world.

Today we can no longer ignore growing evidence that global warming, if left unchecked, could contribute to catastrophic climate change. Regardless of whether or not mankind is primarily responsible for this phenomenon, one thing is clear: the present rate and nature of human development is unsustainable: there are simply too many of us and too few resources to go around.

A series of only three or four bad harvests caused by global warming could plunge much of the world into famine. Whatever else happens, future human development will take place within a framework that will be created by our deteriorating environment. The environment might well prove to be the single most important determinant of our future during the coming century.

It is essential for the world to rally around this issue and to implement the 2015 Paris Accord - which is the next crucial step in the implementation of the United Nations Framework Convention of Climate Change.

The third great challenge is the need to promote global development. Despite the remarkable progress that mankind has made during since World War II, a third of the world's population continues to live at a poverty level below two US dollars per day.

The question is what can be done to remedy this situation - particularly with regard to the slow progress that is being made in combating absolute poverty in sub-Saharan Africa.

I should like to suggest the following approach based on a pragmatic analysis of the progress that we have already made since World War II.

- The first requirement is the protection of the lives and property of people. We must end the conflicts that are continuing to tear some countries apart - primarily in the Middle East and Africa. We must ensure that people can go about their daily lives secure in the knowledge that their persons and their property will be safe. This requires peace and the establishment of effective policing and justice systems.



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- Secondly, governments should establish sound systems of law presided over by independent courts - to protect the fundamental civil and political rights and freedoms of citizens. Everyone should be equally protected by, and subject to, the Rule of Law.
- Thirdly, we must create the circumstances in which free markets can flourish. Economic growth requires an environment in which people can go about their business, practise their professions and make daily choices with the least unnecessary interference. To achieve this, governments should ensure free competition, a fair and open labour market and whatever reasonable regulation might be necessary for the protection of society.
- Fourthly, we need sound governance, based on accountability and the integrity of government officials, the elimination of corruption and the limitation of the powers of bureaucrats to the minimum levels necessary for effective administration.
- Fifthly, governments should be responsible for the provision of cost-effective services. They must provide the education and social services required for a skilled, well-informed and healthy population. They must build and maintain the public infrastructure that is necessary for economic activity and growth. They must provide reasonable care for those who cannot care for themselves.
- Sixthly, they should adopt sound fiscal and economic policies. In particular, they should balance their budgets.
- Seventhly, governments should encourage free and open international trade by reducing tariffs and artificial barriers.

Current tendencies to interfere with free trade could have a very negative impact on poverty alleviation. One of the main reasons that the world has made in alleviating poverty has been the general climate of peace and relatively free trade that the world has enjoyed since the end of World War II.

There is an absolute correlation between societies that take the approach that I have just spelled out and positive economic and social outcomes.

I would like to congratulate the Kingdom of Bahrain on the progress that it has made in advancing social and economic wellbeing. This is reflected in its successful implementation of the Millennium Development Goals and its current commitment to the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. All this is evident in the impressive economic growth and business activity that one sees everywhere in Bahrain - and also in Bahrain's respectable ranking both in the UNDP's Human Development Index and in the World Economic Forum's *Global Competitiveness Index*.

Finally, the fourth great challenge will be to maintain global peace and stability in the new emerging multipolar world.

The central geostrategic reality of our time is that the unipolar world that emerged after the collapse of global communism in the early 1990s has come to an end.



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Following the fall of the Berlin Wall, the victory of the American model of free market economics and liberal democracy was so complete that Francis Fukuyama was able to proclaim “the end of history”.

However, nothing ever ends in history.

In the wake of the economic crisis of 2008 to 2009 the world began to lose confidence in the ‘Washington consensus’ and the accepted wisdom of the 90s. Now it is all but dead.

A number of western democracies are experiencing serious problems with their social-democratic model. They are discovering that countries simply cannot keep on pumping out social benefits without producing the wealth to finance them. The result, inevitably, is bankruptcy.

One of the dominant factors during the coming decades will be growing rivalry between the emerging Asian giants - China - and to a lesser extent India - on the one hand - and the USA and Europe on the other.

During the past 25 years we have seen how Deng Xiao Peng’s introduction of greater economic freedom in China has led to the most spectacular enrichment of the largest number of people in the shortest period in history. More than 400 million people - more than the entire US population - have migrated from rural poverty to relative urban affluence in this period. And there are hundreds of millions waiting in the rural areas to join them.

Similarly, after five decades of independence, India managed to break free from the straight-jacket of Congress socialism. It is also reaping the benefits in dazzling economic growth.

The emergence of China and India as economic superpowers will involve growing competition in world markets for customers and resources. The two economies are rapidly moving to recapture the global economic ascendancy that they had enjoyed for hundreds of years before the 19th century.

In time this competition may also lead to increasing military confrontation. It is unlikely that China will tolerate indefinitely United States military predominance in the Eastern Pacific. Among the most significant developments in recent years may have been China’s aggressive territorial demands in the South China Sea and the massive growth of its involvement with Africa.

All this is presenting the United States and Europe with a seminal challenge: will their social and economic model be able to compete with the challenge from India and China? If not - what will the consequences be?

If the West decides to take on the challenge what will it have to do to ensure the success of its system? It is unlikely that there will be any painless solution. The question is: will western democracies be able to take the pain of competing with the new Asian giants?



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In my opinion these will be the challenges that will confront the international community in coming years:

- The accommodation of cultural, religious and ethnic diversity;
- The looming threat of climate change and the unsustainable nature of our present economic behaviour;
- The need to narrow the gap between the poor and the rich in the world and within countries; and
- The need to manage peacefully the rapidly changing geostrategic relationships between the West and the East.

One thing is certain, in our shrinking world it will not be possible to address any of these challenges unilaterally. Problems that affect the whole world will inevitably have to be solved by the whole world acting multilaterally and in unison.