

Federation for World Peace
SECOND WORLD PEACE CONFERENCE
Peace and the Twenty-first Century
Seoul, Korea, March 26-29, 1994

H.E. Mikhail Gorbachev
Former President of the USSR

KEYNOTE ADDRESS:
Entering the 21st Century

I would like to extend my heartfelt greeting to all of the conference participants. I would also like to thank the sponsors for their kind hospitality. I believe that the agenda for this conference is very timely in that it proposes the discussion of issues connected with the formation of a new world order -- one which is the result of the ending of the cold war.

I think that the time and place for this conference gives it special significance as well. The Korean peninsula, where we are gathered today, in spite of all of the great changes of recent times, remains one of the hot spots of the world, a zone of instability and potential military conflict, which has the possibility to seriously complicate the process of the formation of the new world order.

The current escalation of tensions, in my opinion, is born of an unrealistic state of conflict, one of indirect conflicts of governmental and national interests. This artificial, carefully administered and intentionally inflated tension, is rooted in the specific interest of pressure groups within the country which are the players in this drama.

I hope that our conference will be seen as yet one more sign of solidarity with the Korean people, a people who have born the tragic fate of being divided by the cold war. I hope that we will send a sign of solidarity with the strivings of the Korean people in their efforts to find the path of peaceful reunification.

An entire session of the conference will be devoted to this theme. For this reason, I will not speak in detail of this, but rather begin by emphasizing how actual and important is the agenda of our conference.

The End of the Cold War

The end of the Cold War gives us an enormous chance to confidently enter the 21st century. And this chance must not be lost as happened, alas, in our recent history. We recall, for example, the colossal expectations which were linked to the end of World

H.E. Mikhail S. Gorbachev served as General Secretary, CPSU (1985-90), and President of USSR (1990-91).

War II. Having won the victory in the most bloody war in human history, the nations of the anti-fascist coalition were nevertheless unable to fulfill the opportunity for transforming the international system at that time.

After the defeat of the Axis powers in 1945, there occurred a significant regrouping of forces, which resulted in the USSR's war-time allies ending up in the same camp with its adversaries. The international order, based on the balance of powers in Europe, had crumbled as a result of the war, and a vacuum of power emerged on the European continent, in which the two strongest powers, the USSR and the US, inevitably came into conflict, being transformed into geopolitical adversaries. The Cold War had begun.

In its dimensions, goals and objectives, the Cold War was a struggle between the USSR, the USA and their allies to change the geopolitical alignment of the world to their own advantage. The Cold War was defined by military conflicts, the arms race, and crisis escalation.

Naturally, under such conditions, not only could conflicts not be diffused nor serious problems solved, but the number of problems was continually increasing. The United Nations and other regional organizations were factually deprived of their ability to function effectively. In a divided world, global problems were ever threatening, and their solution was always being postponed to an undefined future.

The great stream of change in recent years in the international arena has brought the idea of a new world order to the forefront of modern political discourse. Three circumstances have played a critical role in this.

The first is, of course, that perestroika, which began in the USSR, not only opened up the possibility for the gradual dismantling of totalitarian regimes in the USSR and in a host of East European countries, but has also hastened the process of global democratization of the international community.

Second, is the fact that the responsible policies of key countries in the mid-80s found the strength and courage to acknowledge that the system of international relations which developed after the Second World War, and which had its origins in the previous century, were leading mankind to an impasse.

The third factor, which is most tragic in its history and dangerous in its consequences, but which has changed the whole geopolitical situation so radically, is the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The global balance was shattered. Enormous zones of instability were formed on the Eurasian territory, saturated with enormous quantities of weapons, including weapons of mass destruction.

As a result of these factors, the world finds itself in a complicated and internally contradictory situation. On the one hand, we have acquired new opportunities to build a new world order, yet on the other hand, we face new challenges and dangers.

New World Order

When we consider the lessons of the Cold War, we better understand what the new world order should not be, rather than knowing what it will be. It is perfectly clear that if the current transitional period turns into yet one more regrouping of forces, as happened after World War II, we will have only reproduced a previous system, although with new players.

Certainly no one, neither politicians nor lay people, thought that so soon after the cold war was ended, after having overcome the great divide of the world, we would immediately find ourselves enjoying the ideal conditions of a new world order. Certainly not.

Between the old and new order there is a transitional period, which we must go through by way of cooperation and mutual relations, using our new opportunities. What we observe today, however, is unfortunately more like a world disorder. I would like to address this issue in more detail.

I'll start with the European continent. After overcoming the great divide, and after the cessation of the opposition of military-political blocs, countries throughout the European continent experienced widespread changes. The countries of the European Community, and their transformation on the basis of the Maastricht treaty, have nevertheless experienced a slowing down of the processes of integration.

One of the reasons for the decline of the political will for unification and mutual action was the end of the fear of the Soviet threat. In all countries (I emphasize all without exception) which constitute this union, there are occurring deep internal changes. Crisis phenomena are increasing (economic decline, ineffective political structures, intensified immigration problems, and losses in the functioning of market mechanisms).

If we take Eastern Europe as an example, its transition to independent development is also connected with the solution of existing goals: the movement to a market economy, political pluralism, the assertion of freedoms, democratic institutions and the search for new forms of cooperation with the West and the states which emerged after the fall of the USSR.

And of course, the most substantial element that characterizes the complexity of the present situation in Europe is the situation in the Russian Federation and other countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States.

The establishment of new, independent states is connected with the solution of many problems, touching upon security, territorial integrity, economics, human rights, and the rights of minorities, among others.

All of this is happening on the territory where a world superpower once existed, which a powerful and cruel totalitarian regime once controlled. It rested on the monopoly of state property, a super-militarized economy, overloaded by the branches of heavy industry, the reign of a single party and a single ideology, where even timid

attempts at political and spiritual pluralism were suppressed. This is happening in a country where many conflicts of different nationalities, deeply embedded and once suppressed, are now erupting to the surface.

Post-Soviet Territory

Now in the post-Soviet territory various processes moving on different vectors are colliding. On the one hand, there are still very strong forces of disintegration which appeared in the process of the dissolution of the Soviet Union. There is an ongoing painful process involving the movement toward national state identities. On the other hand, there is an already noticeable process of reintegration of post-Soviet “territory,” which goes without saying, on a new institutional basis.

These natural centripetal forces have been perceived by many almost as evidence of imminent imperial instincts of Russia which must be firmly blocked. Nothing can be further from the truth. The peoples living on the post-Soviet territory are starting to realize that fate itself destined them to live together.

To try and stop them in the realization of this goal means to push Russia on the path of truly imperialist politics, and to doom the peoples of neighboring countries to the unenviable fate of being the objects of such a policy.

Conversely, assisting the gentle reintegration of post-Soviet territory along the lines of the European Community will create the preconditions for the gradual elimination of the impulses for disintegration, and the stabilization and mitigation of many problems of the post-Cold War period.

I think that you understand perfectly well that in the 21st century, much will depend on what will happen in Russia. It is in the interests of all mankind to see the rise and stabilization of Russia, the transformation of all the territory from St. Petersburg to Vladivostok into a belt which connects the East and West, North and South, a belt of mutually beneficial and peaceful development. Not only the future of the neighboring countries depends on the state of this European-Asian balance, but also that of distant countries as well, and the solution of many world problems.

I am sure that Russia will play a peaceful, integrating and stabilizing role. When we speak of the Asian Pacific region, we speak of a rapidly developing region of the world. According to some estimates, its economy constitutes more than 50 percent of the world gross national product and up to 40 percent of the world’s trade. In spite of the general worldwide recession, there is a continuing growth of GNP and exports in East Asia and the Pacific region. The rates of growth of the countries of this region are exceeding the developed industrial countries.

Asian Pacific Region

It seems that the countries of the Asian Pacific region are lessening their dependence on the American market. On the whole, the dynamic development of the Asian-Pacific region can give new stimulus to world development.

To a large degree the situation in the Asian Pacific region will be determined by the processes taking place in China and its policy in the region. And this, it goes without saying, depends on the course of economic and political reforms in that huge country.

The new situation in the Asian Pacific region is also closely connected with the new role of Japan in the region and world -- a role which corresponds to Japan's economic power.

The role of South Korea has significantly expanded and continues to grow as well, and it is not restricted only to the region.

An entire family of Southeast Asian countries which were formerly very underdeveloped, has emerged to join the ranks of the highly developed countries. They have become an important factor in regional and world politics.

At the center of the changes in the military-political situation in the Asian Pacific region is a conviction of the majority of this regional community that in the modern stage, the determinate factors are economic power and technology, but not military force. It can be predicted with great certainty that the process of change in the strategic analysis will preserve the direction which has been formed in recent years.

The changes in the world after the conclusion of the Cold War as well as the difficulties and contradictions in establishing a new political and economic order in all of their importance are but one of the many expressions of the deeper changes in the development of mankind.

I mean by this the fundamental changes in human civilization, its transformation into a qualitatively different new state, one which is, however, not yet fully defined or understood. Today at least we know one reality that our contemporary civilization, which is driven by the imperatives of industrialism, the unrestrained exploitation of human and natural resources, the social and national conflicts among people, societies and nations; that our civilization, which is also characterized by significant restriction and suppression of human rights, has reached the point of requiring new forms of living and coexistence of peoples and states. In earlier times we lived through similar periods of crisis and change in society, and one need only remember the fall of ancient civilization and the turmoil which accompanied it.

It is said that the means and methods of solving a problem emerge with the problem itself. This is certainly true, of course, but if mankind does not recognize this new threat and does not actively work to prevent it, if we are too late, the course of events may take on a dramatically threatening character.

Fortunately, as a result of our collective efforts, we succeeded in pushing back the threat of nuclear catastrophe, and people could breathe freer. However, so many problems still await solutions, and we have only just begun to address them.

But this extremely important step allowed us to more clearly see the crisis in the technocratic model of development which has led us into the dangerous conflict between man and nature. If we don't take actions in a timely manner, the conflict can undermine the very foundations of life on earth.

Demographic Aspects

Let us consider the demographic aspects of this problem. According to the prognosis of specialists in the field, the world population growth in the second half of the 21st century should stabilize. But at what level? Will it double or triple? Will the planet stand such a strain? Here there are more questions than answers. The question of resources is linked to the growth of population. Naturally the developing nations seek to catch up with the advanced nations. What will be the result if Russia, India, and China reach the current level of production and consumption of the United States? The world extraction of mineral resources would have to increase tens and hundreds of times. There simply are not such resources available on the Earth.

No less troubling is the issue of the preservation of the environment. Will we be able to reverse the damage that has already been done to the atmosphere, the world's oceans, the climate, soil, the plant and animal kingdom.? What are the possibilities for the regeneration of the environment, for the restoration of normal living conditions for mankind? What are the limits of human capacity? Can mankind withstand the psychological stresses from the new technological systems, new and old diseases? Can man adapt to new conditions while preserving homo sapiens?

Questions, questions, questions!

We note another crisis in the forms of social life, the intensification of the contradictions between man and society, between man and authority. We see the deterioration of political systems, and decreased influence of the traditional parties. This is true not only of the former communist countries, but also of the West.

Moral Degradation

Another troubling phenomenon of our time is the moral degradation of the personality. This takes on quite serious dimensions. Spiritual values are being lost, which makes normal human life impossible.

Finally, we have reached an ideological crisis: neither communist nor liberal systems are able to propose a sensible way out of our predicament. In a word, we are talking about a global, multi-faceted crisis. The very meaning of development is placed in question. We need a new paradigm of existence. In the 20th century, mankind acquired common interests and goals-- economic well-being, harmonization with nature, human freedom, equality among peoples and nations. The challenge is how to incorporate these goals into international and national policy.

We think that in principle, it is possible to find a common concept for transformation of the world community into a new civilization. It can be acceptable: a) if it will not be merely another model of an ideal society; b) if this concept will finally dispense with the socialist-capitalist dichotomy; c) if it is based on the recognition of diversity and deep mutual interdependence in the world.

I am also convinced that the path to the future cannot and must not be a revolutionary one. It must be an evolutionary transition by way of reforms, gradual stages, and consistent changes.

In economics this transition is the path of development and transformation of market relations. But there are questions here as well. Can we rely on spontaneous market forces to solve global problems? Will the developing countries have to go through the same stages as did the current leaders of the world market?

For me, it is clear that the market, no matter how technologically and scientifically it is equipped, cannot solve the diverse problems of the coming twenty-first century. In addition to democratic institutions and procedures, the market must be “balanced” by moral criteria.

In international politics, this is a rejection of “imperative-forcing behavior” whether it be military force, the levers of economic pressure, or other forms of pressure. Hegemonism, be it of one country or a group of countries, is inconsistent with the task of transition to a new civilization.

Much depends upon the securing of the rights of nationalities. It is essential to develop the correlation of rights of nationalities within states, and the international rights which would secure the self-preservation of nations, and their relations in the world community.

How we relate to the future is vitally important. It seems to me that we should not transpose the rules of the past onto the future. Such an extrapolation is not only theoretically incorrect, but also dangerous.

The recognition of the many choices of action, the indeterminacy of the future, the rejection of attempts to impose on the intellect unattainable tasks and constructs -- this is our approach.

The very possibility of a new world order, and its effectiveness, depends upon which principles and mechanisms it will base itself.

Obviously, the new world order must secure the regulation of the world processes. A regulation which is based on national and just consideration of the national interests of all countries and of the whole world, and the interdependence of component parts.

If the interests of only one country, or of a group of countries will be the basis of the new world order, and there are many such proposals, then inevitably it will eventually lead to a sad and dangerous conclusion. For it will mean the rejection of so much that is positive and good. It will be walking backwards. This is why we cannot accept such a scenario. It would lead to a new division in the world. The solution, obviously is

completely different. We have to begin by recognizing new realities and a modern reassessment of a whole set of traditional concepts.

Thus, obviously, the deepening interdependence of the nations of the world requires new understanding of the self-determination of nations. The seemingly unstoppable division of states along ethnic lines, the creation of so-called “ethnically pure” nations would lead to such a fragmentation of countries and regions, as well as the world map, that a world politic would become impossible.

International and ethnic conflicts might stimulate the reshuffling of the spheres of influence, as happened in the tragic dissolution of Yugoslavia.

The antidote to the development of such events, in my opinion, is the democratization of international relations and processes of world development, using federations which would give wide possibilities to find the agreement and balance of interests.

Reformation of the United Nations

When I think of the regulation of the world community, I conclude that the most decisive and effective support is needed for proposals to reform the United Nations and to increase the role of the Security Council, including a more active participation of the countries of the Asian-Pacific region in the UN and other international organizations.

Obviously, the United Nations could interact more actively with regional institutes and forums. Here there is positive experience, and yet, unfortunately, negative experience as well. In this regard, everyone has something to think about.

Rather than approval of the Helsinki process by the institutes of the European community, NATO became the driving force instead, and an instrument of the Cold War.

One could hardly expect NATO to be the substitute for European community structures, much less the United Nations, in solving serious problems of the continent. Such an attempt would only worsen the problems, lead to an impasse, and give rise to new suspicions and tensions.

In general, I consider it extremely important to give new life to the European process. The creation of a European security council could facilitate this process, in my opinion. Europe, where so much was done to end the “cold war,” must not become a new cause of tension, nor a polygon for new military conflicts.

I acknowledge that I noted with great pleasure the beginning of my discourse about an “Asian Community,” which was noted in the writings of Yasuhiro Nakasone and Lee Kwan Yew. In this respect, Asia could be setting an example for Europe, where recently there is somehow less concern about the establishment of the European Community. And yet this is so very important, especially now.

In any case, I see much potential to manage existing problems by the close cooperation of the UN bodies with regional organizations.

The future improvement in regulating world processes and the transition to a new world order is closely connected with the assertion of a new value system. For this reason, I would like to emphasize the importance and value of international cooperation in the cultural sphere.

What should be new in approaching the issue? Most likely we must find an organic combination of traditional human values, values which are familiar to each nation. We also need to recognize the colossal global changes in the life of mankind.

I would say that on the threshold of the 21st century, homo sapiens should consider himself as homo globalis, if we might call him that, a world citizen. It is important to carefully preserve the finest things in national cultures. The cultural diversity of the world is its enormous wealth.

A new value system cannot be imposed by force. But what is possible, and what is needed is to help people to understand and feel that living for the sake of others is also best for one's own interests, through the mechanisms of democracy, self-rule and culture.

Sharing with you my thoughts on strengthening the international process, I hope that the United Nations will celebrate its 50 year anniversary rearmed with new approaches and methods of solving problems for world development.

I hope that this conference, and our continued social and scientific contact will actively facilitate the noble and so vital formation of a new world order. This is the way I see the path to the 21st century. Thank you for your attention. ■