

INTERNATIONAL ADVOCATE FOR PEACE AWARD ACCEPTANCE SPEECH*

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*The Eighth International Peace Award Recipient****

Thank you so much. Those were two wonderful, kind introductions. I was reminded, as you were talking, about how in academia we have some very special things to add to the world. Not only do we gain knowledge within the academic community, but we share this knowledge to help solve global problems.

We are living in an extraordinary time. On the one hand, for example, our tools are so powerful that we can realistically think about ending deaths from malaria, a discussion I was having with

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*** Every year the Cardozo Journal of Conflict Resolution presents the International Advocate for Peace Award to an individual who does exemplary work in the field of conflict resolution and who embodies Justice Benjamin N. Cardozo's passion and commitment to the field of law. For more information on this award, please visit: www.cardozojcr.com. Past Recipients include: President William Jefferson Clinton; Archbishop Desmond M. Tutu; Senator George Mitchell and Seeds of Peace; Ambassador Richard C. Holbrooke; Ambassador Dennis Ross; Writer Eve Ensler; and Advocate Betty Kaari Murungi.

African ambassadors just a few minutes ago. We can realistically think about ending extreme hunger on the planet because we have developed the fantastic science of water management, high-yield seeds, soil nutrient management, new agro-ecology and new conservation agriculture. Given the wealth and knowledge we have, if we ever stopped to calmly think about it, we would recognize a phenomenal ability to do things. Yet, let's be clear: at the same time we are also on the verge of chaos in this world. The world is unsafe, unstable and probably getting worse. We are fighting an obviously preposterous and tragic war. It was built on the tissue of lies from the start. Yet, we are spending half a trillion dollars for that in direct costs, and another half a trillion dollars for all the things we don't count, such as the decades of pain and suffering and disability that our community will bear. And this is not even including the costs that are imposed on hundreds of thousands of Iraqis: deaths, massive disarray and unthinkable amounts of suffering.

So the world right now is a really peculiar place. We have the phenomenal capacity to solve problems and the phenomenal capacity to really mess things up. We have to puzzle through how we can get this right – and I can think of no better place to do it than a law school dedicated to great international legal challenges and a journal like the journal on conflict resolution. The role of the economist is to keep saying how low cost the real solutions are. The example that drives me crazy is the following. To control malaria, the best technology we have these days is the anti-malaria bed net. This might seem like a humble technology, because bed nets have been around for a very long time. But now bed nets are manufactured in a sophisticated way so that they retain the insecticide for about five years without the need for re-treatment; this is a huge advancement for poor communities. There are three hundred million sleeping sites in malaria transmission regions of Africa. Three hundred million sleeping sites must be protected with a net like this. Each net cost \$5. Here is where my PhD always comes in handy: three hundred million, times five turns out to be \$1.5 billion. Now, here's where some long division is interesting. This year, the United States is spending \$650 billion on the military. If you divide \$650 billion by 365 days, you find that we are spending \$1.7 billion a day on the military. For one day's Pentagon spending we could protect every sleeping site in Africa for five years against Malaria. \$1.7 billion is a rounding error for a macro economist! I am the last macro economist dealing in billions. All my friends

deal in trillions, but we can't even raise \$1.5 billion dollars for comprehensive malaria control. That's how peculiar this world is. Spending on the military is over a hundred times more than spending on aid for the forty-nine countries in Africa. This year \$650 billion is being spent on the military, yet only \$5 billion is spent on aid in Africa, the poorest region of the world.

Here is the beauty of this prize, and why I am so thrilled and very grateful. You got it right to point to development for a journal on conflict resolution. The wars we are facing are wars of insecurity, economic instability and extreme poverty. We call them wars of Islamic terror and so forth but this is a mistake. There are many Islamic parts of the world (like Sudan, Somalia, Yemen, Afghanistan, Pakistan, et cetera) that are just fine and at peace, and there are other parts of the world that are so poor you would not even believe that people could live in these places for a day, much less for their entire lives. It is almost hard to imagine how poor these places are, and they are unstable because of their impoverishment. They are sites for war lords, and they are sites for military, and they are sites for radicalism because people are desperate and they do not see what their future is. It seems like our leadership, which is certainly the worst this country has ever had, is blind at the moment. We are absolutely incapable of understanding these issues other than through the barrel of a gun.

The case of Darfur, perhaps the worst humanitarian crisis on the planet and a site of great violence, illustrates this point. It is hard to imagine how poor Darfur is. Seventy-five years ago, the population was one million people, and now there are seven million people living there. Meanwhile, the rainfall has declined by about thirty-five percent because of long term climate change during the last thirty years. As Darfur did not exactly start out as the most robust place, there are the makings of about the poorest place on the whole planet. The livestock has died, there is no place to feed, and there is chronic hunger and instability. It is quite clear that the root of this conflict is extreme poverty and all that goes with it: the degradation of the pasture lands, the fact that there are no livelihoods or futures, and the almost complete lack of education and clinics and so on. So what happens? Mass violence; rather than provide any kind of aid or development project, we wait until there is great violence and hundreds of thousands of people are killed before we get involved. We are constantly being told in this country that we do not want to give money away to poor people, as that is money down the drain. Instead, now we are go-

ing to put in peace keepers. I tell you, there is no chance that you can make peace in Darfur without some more wells, some clinics, some schools, and some veterinary care; that is what the communities need. Troops can do nothing in this context, yet twenty-six thousand troops will be placed there, costing two and a half billion dollars a year. That would be aid of about \$350 dollars per capita for Darfurians. If I ever suggested that level of aid for development I would be carried away in a straight jacket as a crazy man! For the last couple of years, I have been trying to say to the U.N. and the diplomatic community that Darfur has a very severe water crisis, but I have not been heard. However, I was called in the middle of this summer for an emergency meeting on water in Darfur, with UN DPKO, the peace keeping department. I thought they were finally waking up to this problem. But it appeared that the emergency meeting was because they could not figure out how provide water for the 26,000 troops! They were considering flying it in by tankers, or building a 1000 mile pipeline for the troops, because they know that if they put the bore wells down it will just drain the local aquifers. So in fact, they can't actually station the troops. But the full irony is that while this was with reference to 26,000 people, there are seven million people living in Darfur. So, I think you have it exactly right to think about conflict resolution through the lens of development, climate change and natural hazards, because this is the only path to peace that we are going to get.

Two days ago I was in Geneva with one of this year's two Nobel peace prize laureates, Dr Pachauri, who heads the inter-governmental panel on climate change. It was a phenomenally clever award. Not only because of all that Al Gore has done for how we think of climate change, but also because it generated an important question for the committee, "why would the peace prize go to climate change?" Unless we understand the human condition and unless we understand the underlying sources of the instability on this planet, we will find ourselves spiraling farther and farther out of control.

There are no military solutions to our problems. There are solutions through economic development, environmental sustainability and learning what seems to be the hardest thing of all: how to cooperate with each other. I always like to remember what I believe are the most beautiful words any American president has spoken in modern history, and what I believe is the most American speech given by an American president in decades. That is John

Kennedy's commencement address at American University, 1963, sometimes called "the Peace Speech." It was a speech where Kennedy put forward to the American people that it was possible to make peace with the Soviet Union. This was something like a president saying today that it is possible to make peace with Iran. Such peace seemed as unlikely then as it does today. But he said it so beautifully and without saying a word about what their other side should do, only that we should understand the issues from the American side, and that we should understand the valor of the Soviet people. We should understand the moral worth. We should understand that they have a great stake in peace as well. It was all about *us* and nothing about the adversary. Khrushchev liked the speech so much he said it was the most important speech any American president had given since FDR. Six weeks later, the Partial Nuclear Test Ban Treaty was signed, with that speech playing an important role. But my favorite words in Kennedy's speech are when he said, "in the final analysis, our most common basic link is that we all inhabit the same small planet, we all breathe the same air, we all cherish our children's future, and we are all mortal."

Thank you very much. [Applause]

Moderator: Professor Sachs has a few minutes for a couple of questions. Do we have any from the floor?

Question: I have followed a lot of your work, a lot of the work that has been done by Bono, and other very famous people, but I feel like a lot of the emphasis is on what could be done at a high level. I am wondering if you can speak to us about what we can do as individuals.

Professor Sachs: In my view, I think the most important thing for a law school to do is what I would call "the reinvigoration of international law." Let me give an example which I found shocking. A couple of law professors wrote an article about climate change this summer, in a *Financial Times* op-ed. These two University of Chicago professors should know their business, but they wrote an absolutely horrendous article. They wrote that climate change is really a big problem for the tropics and some other places, but not such a big problem for us. Their premise was that the U.S. should not care so much. They suggested that if countries in the tropics don't like what we're doing, they should pay us – or bribe us – to stop it. The article was wrong on every fact, but what shocked me

most was that the paper was completely wrong on international law. They essentially said we can do what we want. In actual fact, under international law we are committed not to damage the environment of other nations. In our law, we actually have a commitment to stabilize greenhouse gases. It is called the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. It is a 1992 treaty which was ratified in 1994, and was signed by President George Bush, Sr. As far as I understand from the U.S. Constitution, that makes it U.S. law — an international treaty duly ratified and in effect. It calls on all signatories to take steps to stabilize greenhouse gases. My feeling is that nobody in this country even knows that we have such a commitment, and I would include the President of the United States in that, as it is quite clear he knows the least about these issues.

We can not have peace in this world unless international law counts for something. It seems to me that we need a reinvigoration, not just of the morality of international cooperation, not just the practicality of international cooperation — because unilateralism seems to be a pretty big clunker compared to what the American people were sold — but also a reinvigoration of the concept of international law, and the constitutional underpinnings of treaty law in the United States. There is a whole host of treaties we are party to that we have now completely ignored. As I think about this from the point of view of a law school, to me, this is the major issue and challenge. I do not see the difference between national law and international law in terms of real substance and survivability. It is typically said that there is no global sovereign, only a national sovereign, so international law is somehow different. But the truth is that the national sovereign is also based on the suspension of disbelief, if you will, or I should say on a consensus that we will obey the law. President Kennedy gave a speech the day after the one I quoted earlier, and asked: When calling for enforcement of the desegregation writ, if the writ of the judge is not honored, what will our law mean at all? And the same is true of domestic law, and international law. Law only works if you believe that it should be taken seriously, and we need to take international law seriously again, and in a much more direct way. From the journal's point of view, there is so much good that we have already signed, such as the convention on climate change, the convention to combat desertification, of course several non-proliferation treaties and so forth. If we actually honored them, that alone would make the world vastly safer.

I want to appeal to you in Cardozo Law School to help lead the effort to take international law seriously again. I also appeal to you to help Americans understand that this is not some constraint on our sovereignty but this is exactly how we can create a peaceful and civilized world we signed these laws internationally as we did, domestically, in order to achieve an ordered society. That would be my first recommendation. I believe in general, since I am an economist, that everybody should exercise their comparative advantage. In other words do what you do best; and since you are the masters of law I would say use legal instruments.

I would also like to emphasize another area. All of the economic goals that I try to promote through the Millennium Development Goals, like the adequacy of food, healthcare and so forth, are actually international human rights. For example, they are part of the universal declaration of human rights. Many law scholars have asked me why I do not take a rights based approach. My answer is that I would love to, but show me the tools. I think this is another important challenge: How do we use the legal rights that are part of these global agreements as effective instruments? We need to talk about legal rights and we need to build up their legitimacy by taking them seriously, but we also need to use all of the tools. Who can we sue? How can we actually enforce these rules through every institution? Who can we drag into the international court, not only the court of public opinion, but the Hague as well. We need leverage everywhere. We need first to understand that these are affordable, solvable issues.

The rich world has promised to increase aid to Africa by \$25 billion a year by the year 2010. So what's \$25 billion among friends? What metric can you use for that? Well, if you divide by 1.7 billion a day you can find out that it's probably fifteen days of Pentagon spending. But, I'll give you another one. \$25 billion was the Wall Street Christmas bonus last December. Actually, I exaggerate: it was \$24 billion. Goldman Sachs got \$18 billion – wrong side of the Sachs family. If it were my family, I would no doubt be a philanthropist. And the other firms got \$6 billion. \$24 billion, just on Wall Street for the Christmas bonus. And the rich world – the chancellor of Germany, the Prime Minister of Italy, the President of France – is agonizing over whether we can reach this goal with the tight budgets we have. Our own President doesn't agonize about this, as he doesn't even know that the U.S. made this commitment under his signature. I'm here to tell you this is simple and I'm asking you to help figure out how to get it done.

