

Global Peace Leadership Conference, Asunción, Paraguay

October 20, 2010

Address



His Excellency Dr. Federico Franco, Vice-President of the Republic of Paraguay; His Excellency Victor Bogado, President of the Chamber of Deputies; highest national authorities, members of religious communities, distinguished participants from around the world, it is a great pleasure to meet you here in Asunción, Paraguay. Thank you for your participation and continued support in the noble cause of peace.

Let me first express my appreciation for those who have worked tirelessly to make this significant conference a reality. It is only through “true owners,” who are willing to make the necessary sacrifices out of their busy schedules, that the all too-important work for peace is sustained.

I especially want to recognize my good friend, the Honorable Lilian Samaniego, a member of Parliament and also a member of the Global Peace Foundation’s Global Leadership Council. I also want to salute and thank the esteemed Former Presidents of the Republics of Uruguay, Bolivia, Guatemala and Paraguay, their Excellencies Dr. Luis Alberto La Calle, Dr. Jorge Quiroga, Dr. Vinicio Cerezo, and Dr. Juan Carlos Wasmosy respectively. And special thanks to the GPF Organizing Committee, cooperating government agency partners, and countless volunteers for their dedicated efforts in organizing these important programs. Please show your appreciation to them with warm applause

Each time that I visit Paraguay, I am reminded of its amazing potential to be the true leader of Latin America. Earlier this year, I had the chance to meet the directors of the Global Peace Foundation which was created shortly after the Global Peace Festival in 2008. I was encouraged to see that the dream of “One Family under God” had not faded but is still alive in the hearts of many conscientious leaders in Paraguay. They are aware that greatness is not found in material objects, but true greatness is found in the principles and values that inspire men and women to live for others- to live for their families, to live for their communities, to live for their nation, and most of all, to live for the sake of God.

As many of you may know, I was born in Korea. This is a particularly exciting juncture for South Korea, as it prepares to host the important G-20 Nations’ Summit for the first time next month in Seoul. Its inclusion in the G-20 marks the high point of the South’s economic miracle, which began with its devastation at the end of the Korean War, to its recognition today as the 12th largest economy in the world.

All around the globe, but particularly in the southern hemisphere, we find that, like Korea of the 1950s and 60s, many nations and regions are today undergoing dramatic change, facing pivotal challenges, and at the same time significant opportunities. The global financial crisis which has paralyzed the developed nations of the northern hemisphere has left the southern hemisphere with its developing economies relatively unscathed. Many in these nations are questioning the established western models of development and are looking for alternative solutions, creating an opportune moment for leadership and change.

We have reached an inflection point in human history where the circumstances of this moment are preparing the world for a paradigm shift of major proportions which could positively or negatively affect this century. Being a man of faith, I cannot but feel the hand of divine providence guiding these developments in this era. Yet, at the same time, as a young man in my 40s, I feel the urgency for a new generation of global leaders to make their mark in history. I submit to you that the deciding factor at such times is always moral and innovative leadership, on every level.

What do I mean by moral and innovative leadership? First, it has to promote a “greater good” that can benefit not only the individual but the larger society, nation and eventually the world. This is the moral orientation of the leadership I am describing. To come to fruition, it has to be guided by a vision and a clear set of irrevocable universal principles and values that have the breadth and depth to encompass the diversity of the human family.

Secondly, it has to harness mankind’s natural creative need to advance and develop the human condition. This is the innovative component of leadership. As you all know, every culture has examples of

extraordinary men and women who propelled humanity forward in the fields of philosophy, ethics, the sciences, athletics and the cultural arts, by freely exercising their God-given talents even to the point of challenging existing paradigms. Although many faced difficulties due to the religious, societal and legal constraints of their time, it is fair to say that the modern world with its greater freedoms and advancements has benefited greatly due to the sacrifices of these innovators.

Ladies and gentlemen, the modern era has seen some of the greatest scientific advances in recorded history that continue to shrink the globe with dramatic improvements in travel, communications, and the exchange of knowledge and information. In the past, distance and time were the “physical impediments” which isolated and separated the human race. However, they are no longer relevant impediments. In other words, science and technology have taken away the physical barriers but have not taken away the racial, religious, national, tribal or ethnic pretensions which are still the source of ongoing conflicts around the world.

The Global Peace Foundation is leading efforts for peace based upon a spiritual vision expressed in the simple yet profound phrase, One Family under God. This vision’s transformative power comes from the fundamental truth that all people, regardless of race, religion, nationality, tribe or ethnicity, are spiritual beings who share a common heritage in one God or Creator. As Victor Hugo said, “more powerful than an invading army is an idea whose time has come.” Around the world, our Global Peace Festivals have demonstrated that peoples of widely diverse backgrounds are ready to embrace this vision and commit themselves to engaging, working and living as one global family.

Centered upon the vision of “One Family under God,” GPF has developed multi-sector partnerships with its action-oriented initiatives in three key areas: 1) building interfaith partnerships, 2) strengthening families, and 3) promoting a “culture of heart” through service. In just three years, GPF has engaged millions of people on six continents, drawing on the energy and conviction of civil society partners, the resources of the business community, the shared values of faith-based organizations, as well as the engagement of government agencies.



Our innovative approach to interfaith partnerships has brought leaders from all the great faith traditions, as well as those who do not espouse a faith, to participate together in unprecedented ways. Unlike the interfaith of the past which was often an effort by a particular religious tradition to promote tolerance or understanding from those outside of their faith, GPF conscientiously avoids advocating any particular religious tradition, but rather highlights spirituality as a basis of building a common platform of shared aspirations, principles and values. As a result, we are effectively working around the globe; from former communist bloc nations to the primarily pluralistic and capitalist Americas; from the secular, progressive European Union to the deeply religious Middle East; from tribal Africa to the diversity and energy of Asia.

We have continually seen that when people of faith collaborate in partnership for the greater good, even the most challenging social problems can be effectively addressed. In Indonesia, for example, GPF partnered recently with Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), one of the largest Muslim civic organizations in the world, to hold a global interfaith summit. In addition, GPF is also partnering with NU on

the Power of Rupiah project that educates youth to be socially aware of the plight of their less fortunate neighbors, regardless of class, faith, or ethnicity, as well as to raise resources to address poverty and other serious social problems.

Secondly, GPF affirms that the family is not only vital to the spiritual well-being of the individual, but also to building a peaceful society, nation and world. The family is the fundamental unit of society where the most essential of life skills are learned. It is the school of love, where the virtues that underlie all positive social relations are practiced and made real. Therefore, it is vital to support the traditional institutions of marriage and family, both in public policy and through practical initiatives. I am proud to report that, with the support of GPF and its partners, the new Kenyan constitution which was recently adopted with overwhelming support included provisions to protect the sacred institution of marriage as well as the sanctity of life in the womb.

Both these issues are heavily contested in the more developed western democracies, but Kenya, although considered to be part of the developing world, has taken a lead on these social issues, recognizing that they have national and global consequences. I would like to point out that this era offers such opportunities for other nations, rich or poor, to chart their own destinies and be leaders in key critical issues affecting the global community. But, of course to be leaders, one has to be guided by an altruistic spirit of service as well as be cognizant of the issues and their potential outcomes.

That is why GPF's third area of focus is on creating a "culture of heart" through the cultivation of individual character and the transformative power of service. Service in this broader context entails tapping human creativity in collaborative efforts to solve problems, by making "owners" of the solution rather than merely "participants" in the process. Thus, GPF promotes social entrepreneurship and community driven development initiatives, "owned" by local partners, as important tools in addressing the most challenging human problems as well as maintaining sustainability. In addition, serving together in common cause can help to break down barriers that exist between peoples in conflict, and thus can be a powerful instrument for peace, understanding, and personal transformation.

GPF, through its subsidiary the Global Peace Service Alliance, is collaborating on cutting edge international initiatives such as "Service World." At the same time, it initiates and supports projects that can serve as effective national and international impact models. For example, the success of the Nairobi River cleanup project in the aftermath of Kenya's post-election violence in 2008 became the Rivers of Peace initiative that we are now taking around the world.

Inspired by that successful model, GPF in Nepal has now launched a similar project to clean the badly polluted Bagmati River in Kathmandu, traditionally considered a national symbol and, more importantly, a holy river. Thousands of volunteers gathered just a few weeks ago for the enthusiastic kickoff of the Bagmati River cleanup campaign. Already this campaign has gained significant momentum with support of youth leaders, community-based organizations, and local businesses.

Ladies and gentlemen, the purpose of the GPF series for 2010 is to promote effective sustainable solutions for the developing world by actively but innovatively engaging the Millennium Development Goals. The first step is to identify real national models that have worked and then to build the necessary private and public partnerships that can replicate and adapt that model abroad.

As a Korean by birth who experienced the post-war poverty of Korea, its economic transformation has truly been amazing. This modern example of national economic growth did not take centuries but only a few decades and, thereby, offers an alternative road map to prosperity. That is why GPF chose to hold the first Global Peace Leadership Conference of 2010 in Seoul, Korea.

Economic prosperity is the goal for all nations, but it is also important to note that with development comes further challenges. Although Korea is the 12th largest economy in the world, it is currently facing the erosion of its traditional family values and its spiritual heritage. Unlike the Korea of my youth, it now faces one of the highest divorce rates and lowest birth-rates of any developed nation. This will have untold political and social-economic consequences down the road. In addition, the proud, self-reliant character of Korea's past is slowly changing, like the case in many developed nations, in the face of secular progressive forces that promote welfare policies at the expense of social and political stability as well as economic growth.

That is why I believe that moral and innovative leadership is so important today, not only in developing nations but also the developed world. Moral leadership provides the roadmap for nation building by outlining a vision rooted in universal aspirations, principles and values, while innovative leadership provides the methods in which that vision can be realized. Both are like two sides of a coin.

I believe most will agree that the true cause of the global recession can be directly attributed to the erosion of principles and values. For if people in power do not self-regulate themselves, then any system or institution will experience corruption and eventual collapse, as we have seen with Wall Street. Regulatory agencies are not the answer either, since they face the same leadership challenges of all institutions, as well as being another costly bureaucracy. At the end of the day, it is leadership, or lack thereof, that will determine outcomes, whether positive or negative.

Here in Paraguay, GPF has taken the lead in moral and innovative leadership through the Global Peace Foundation of Paraguay, with the explicit purpose of addressing the critical issues of nation building on many levels. With that mission, it has already established an institute (IDPPS), or "think tank," to create a concrete roadmap for Paraguay's future. The first step would be to build a development model for the vast Chaco region, which happens to be the largest yet poorest state of Paraguay. This proposal is being seriously considered by the highest levels of government and shows the possibilities of public and private partnerships to address social-economic challenges in the developing world.

In addition, it is also engaged in service initiatives that address the broader environmental and educational needs of Paraguay. Through partnerships with leading conservation groups, the foundation is making efforts to protect and preserve Paraguay's indigenous species as well as introduce established and proven models of conservation. Recently, it has formalized an agreement with a leading NGO, "A Todo Pulmon," to promote a culture of service among young people by planting trees in many parks and open spaces in and around the city of Asuncion. In line with its commitment to education, it has signed a three-year agreement with the Ministry of Education to promote and provide character education materials throughout Paraguay's public school system.

Yet, even with these initiatives, far more needs to be done to galvanize Paraguay to be a moral and innovative leader among nations here in Latin America. This is the case especially given the geo-political and economic context of this region and the entire hemisphere. We have to accept the inevitable, especially all of us who live in the west. There are rising powers in Asia that are already shifting the balance of economic, diplomatic and military power from the West to the East. China alone is a nation with a population base of 1.5 billion, not to mention India which has a population base of 900 million. With just these two countries, on the south eastern coast of Asia, there are 2.5 billion people. If you include Japan and northeast Asia as well its hinterland up to the Middle East, Asia represents more than two thirds of humanity populating the globe.

Given the energy and vast amounts of human, material, natural, and financial resources in Asia, the West has to accept the fact that, under the current state of affairs, it will be surpassed and, possibly, made inconsequential on the global stage. It has to recognize the inevitable and prepare to be a more viable competitor to Asia if it is to take hold over its own destiny. This is the time in which forward-thinking people, especially in this hemisphere, must conceive of a new geo-political and economic order.

If you look at the creation of the European Union, it was conceived from economic disaster. In order to compete with the United States, the fragmented nations of Europe needed to create a union similar to the scope of the United States. Now, what will the United States, even with the European Union, do to compete with the rising tide of Asia? The United States has a population of only 300 million. The population of China alone is five times bigger than the United States.

The West needs to start a movement to create more strategic regional and even continental partnerships where fragmented national interests can be replaced with a coordinated hemispheric one. The first step is to create a greater Latin American Union in the south and a greater Central-Caribbean Union in the center of this hemisphere. Here in Latin America, there is already a movement to realize the dream of Simon Bolivar of creating a larger Latin American union. Unfortunately, the proponents of this vision are not necessarily the champions of human rights and fundamental freedoms endowed to us by God. Nor do they represent the majority of nations and people who are struggling with basic needs and challenges of developing countries.

Of course, when I speak about these issues with Brazilians, they naturally think this is a great idea and that the headquarters of a Latin American Union should, obviously, be in Brazil. And I'm sure if I were to go to speak to the Colombians, Argentineans or Chileans they would say the same. However, as is evident in Europe, the headquarters of the European Union resides in Belgium instead of one of the powerhouses of Europe such as Germany, France or England because a smaller neutral country can better arbitrate the interests of more powerful nations as well as represent the interests of the less developed partners.

Something tells me that if a similar union develops here in Latin America, its headquarters will be in a smaller neutral nation as well. If I were to characterize what that nation would look like, it would have a vision big enough to digest the diversity of Latin America as well as advocate a set of universal principles and values that uplift human dignity and fundamental human rights and freedoms. Therefore, it will be a nation that has a deep faith with a deep conviction in the future not only for their nation but for the entire region as well.

Seeing the fruits of the seeds planted here two years ago, Paraguay can definitely show Latin America and the world its true faith and what its true conviction entails. I can foresee that when the vision of building a greater Latin American Union sweeps over the continent of South America, the obvious choice for its headquarters will be Paraguay!

Ladies and gentlemen, my faith is in Paraguay. You stand at the center of this great continent, like a womb ready to spring forth a new life to Latin America. I am deeply touched by your spiritual heritage and connection to your indigenous culture and language. I know you are a relatively young democracy and small country sandwiched by giants. However, I am honored to be here with you, and I find strength in your faith that although Paraguay might be small you have a dream that Paraguay, some day, can rise to greatness and that a bright future will dawn for your nation. You have faith in each other and most of all you have faith in God. That is why I believe that Paraguay can truly own the greatest dream of all, the dream to build "One Family under God."

If I may be so bold, I would like to challenge the nation of Paraguay to dream big and take on the mantle of global moral and innovative leadership. First, let us pave the path to peace and reconciliation in this hemisphere through the unifying vision of “One Family under God.” Second, let it be the regional leader that could arbitrate the interests of its more powerful neighbors to maintain peace and stability throughout South America. Third, let it be the international advocate for the vision to create “One Family under God” throughout the world, thereby, being a leading nation in the global peace process.

As I stand here before you, I am struck with the significance of this moment- a moment when a dream could be planted that sparks the imagination of a nation and an entire region to seize its destiny and make a mark on human history. Ladies and gentlemen, the future is yours to mold. Will you not seize that moment? Will you regret the lost opportunity to make a difference? Or, will you rise with me to dream the greatest dream of all to build a world of peace and co-prosperity through the vision of “One Family under God?” The choice is yours and the moment is yours.

Thank you very much and may God bless you in all your endeavors.