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Day 2 – Final Session
**Effective multilateralism:
what are the priorities?**

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MULTILATERALISM IN LIGHT OF DEMOCRATIC AND COMMONLY-SHARED VALUES

*Distinguished Participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

To begin with, I would like to express my hearty thanks and gratitude for the organizers of this Conference in general, and for my friend Alvaro de Vasconcelos in particular for giving me the pleasure to speak to you this morning.

The fact that multilateralism and multilateral institutions are under constant scrutiny seems to be quite obvious to many of us. It is also true that doubts about the effectiveness of multilateralism and the institutions related to it is causing a great deal of anxiety in many parts of the world, especially in societies that are weak in respect to economic well-being, political stability and social cohesion. I am sure that in the previous sessions of this Annual Conference, this topic was dealt with from various points of view. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why Mr. Alvaro de Vasconcelos asked me to try to look at the issue at hand from the stand-point of democracy and commonly shared values which have some bearing upon the practice of multilateral system, although they are not usually mentioned in our mainstream political discourse, due to some reasons which are quite understandable.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to continue my speech with two quotations from the UN Report on “Alliance of Civilizations”- an initiative that was put forward and fully supported by Spain and Turkey, and co-chaired by me and by Federico Mayor, the former Directory General of UNESCO.

The Report formulates one of its “guiding principles” as follows:

An increasingly interdependent and globalized world can be regulated only through the rule of law and **an effective multilateral system** with United Nations system and its core. This requires adherence to international law and covenants including all rights and responsibilities governing the conduct of war as articulated in International Humanitarian Law (particularly the Geneva Conventions), respect for the institutions that establish them.....

In terms of political well-being there is a growing perception that universal principles of human rights and democratic governance are only vigorously defended in those cases where they are viewed by some states to be in their own interests – a selective approach that undercuts the legitimacy of the multilateral institutions mandated to articulate, advance and advocate for those principles.

I am of the opinion that both, the **demand** stated in the first quotation and a shade of **pessimism** mentioned in the second are justified.

*Distinguished Participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

I think it is not an exaggeration to say that certain tragic and awful events that took place in the last few years seem to have created a climate in which many people began to be concerned about the fragile nature of the ongoing global democratic life, the future of reasonable pluralism, the politics of multi-culturalism, international political order, including multilateralism, the meaning and significance of the so-called “world community”, the actual influence of international institutions such as UN, OIC, OSCE, the binding force of international legality and more deeply perhaps about the relationship that exists between the present *order of power* and the *order of moral value*. Hope for a peaceful and creative coexistence appears to be under serious threat in places where it has so far looked fairly promising and sustainable. Many have come to think that “our world is becoming more and more dangerously out of balance”.

Despite these rather gloomy introductory lines I am one of those who believe that the current predicament, at least some of its major components, are not going to be the permanent features of the future of the world system that ought to move towards *more* democracy and not *less* democracy.

Democracy that defines itself (in addition to many other things) as a *system of values* seems to be the only form of governance that leads us to a humane “unity in diversity” one clear expression of which is multilateralism. In other words, to a unity “around commonly shared values” such as respect for human dignity, justice as fairness, rule of law, accountability, transparency on the one hand, and a full acceptance of reasonable plurality and of a culture that is hospitable towards diversity, and thus genuine differences that do not infringe upon the shared values and the human rights regime.

Regarding the issue at hand, I wish to refer to two important points, or even *crises* if you like.

The first one is related to the problems regarding social stability, order and security- an issue which has two major dimensions: local and global. Our present internal and external security needs are usually, if not always, met, unfortunately, at the expense of the democratic space that has been mostly and painfully enlarged and deepened in the Western milieu, in general and recently in the process of the march towards the European Union in particular.

We all agree that security is a must. No human system is worthier than human life itself. But some ways and means can be, in fact, ought to be found out in order to secure security and stick to “the Security First” principle without harming democratic rights and freedoms.

If democracy is now a universal concern, then an attention and a vision are needed for implanting the tree of democracy in the global city. The minimum requirement of global care is to stick to a largely accepted and respected *legal framework* supported by multilateral institutions and to form a reasonable degree of *world opinion*. No one can help the course of democracy by closing his or her eyes to enlightened world opinion and by taking little notice of the legal status and concerns of our global institutions such as the UN and other peace-oriented organizations, especially the civil ones.

As I have hinted at the beginning of my speech, democracy is also a *system of values*. The existence of these values and *insistence upon them* do not render politics into a kind of “moralism”. Nor, do these values close the doors for the so-called “real politik”. This insistence is justified, since there is no inherent contradiction between the order of **power** and the order of **values**. True, there are difficulties. There is always a possibility of great tensions between facts and values, between “is” and “ought”. But none of these can annihilate the force of the shared moral law in public sphere, which cannot be solely defined in terms of interest. I am saying all this with the full awareness of various objections coming from a long chain of the practitioners of the “real politik” from Machiavelli to his modern disciples who

believe that in politics there are no universal values but only “the reason of state”. This is perhaps one of the reasons why “the political paradigm of modernity governed by real politics is caught up in a fundamental crisis”¹, as Hans Küng wisely pointed out long time ago. Whether such paradigm was put into practice in the garb of a crusade for democracy or not makes little difference as far as the real and the possible crises of democracy are concerned. For those who struggle for democratic transition, ethics is the great challenge. There can be no full-fledged democracy without *morally responsible democrats* in whose lives democracy is not just a legal-political and economic system with some clearly defined mechanisms but also an existential program that demands a sincere personal commitment to values on which democracy is founded. I mean the values that are universalistic in some important sense, and over which no culture, no religion, no continent can have the right to claim monopoly. In other words, they are not Christian, or Judeo-Christian, or European, or Islamic values. They belong, to all of us, “us”, us humans, and they should remain with all of us. This fact is secured both **ontologically** and **epistemologically**: We *know* that these values *are*. Our differences lie not in *ordo essendi* nor in *ordo cognoscendi*, but in the *order of praxis*. The undeniable fact that these values have so far had more chance in the Western praxis to develop does not make them exclusively Western. To think otherwise is, to destroy bridges between communities, cultures and civilizations and thus ultimately pave the way for dividing world that may easily result in weakening our hope for a unity in diversity.

Let me make it clear: No one has the right to object to “**cultural**” arguments that are usually the expressions of cultural identities. We all have to be against “**culturalist**” arguments that are mainly essentialist, fundamentalist, divisive, exclusivist and even racist. They are emotional rather than rational; hence their power in the streets even in the European street.

Despite all this, however, I am quite optimistic regarding dialogical encounter, civilizational alliance, the future of international institutions and multilateral policies. Ideas and experiences that have so far contributed to feed such practices as multilateralism, multiculturalism and so on, still have many wise defenders in all cultures. Europe or the “Old Europe”, if you like, “have always had a concept of state as the guardian of the public interest (and a common good) standing above the particular interests of the state’s citizens”. Many Europeans (many of us) say similar things regarding liberal democratic values, since “they believe in such values independently of their embodiment in actual democratic nation-states.” (F. Fukuyama, *State Building*).

It was this starting-point that led to the “Universal Declaration of Human Rights” more than half a century ago, and to the formation of international institutions at the centers of multilateral political discourse and activities that may not solve all our problems but, nevertheless, can render good service in many parts of the world.

¹ See his “A Global Ethics for Global Politics and Economy, SCM Press, London, p.27.