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Exposé de M. Kofi Annan, Dr h.c. Dies Academicus 2008

Les défis de l'égalité

Messieurs les présidents du Parlement et du Gouvernement neuchâtelois;
Madame la Conseillère d'Etat Sylvie Perrinjaquet, cheffe du département de l'éducation, de la culture et des sports;
Madame la professeure Martine Rahier, rectrice de l'Université
Ladies and gentlemen,

I am delighted to be here and not just for the great honour that is about to be bestowed on me. I also have a personal connection that makes it special.

Insert personal story about the connection to Neuchatel

I am honoured to be recognized by such a distinguished university and by a Law Department with such an excellent reputation. One of your fields of excellence is constitutional law and *l'esprit des lois* is one of the subjects I want to discuss with you today.

I. The world is interconnected as never before

I should say that I was particularly gratified to see the terms in which this honorary degree is being conferred: for my "contribution to peace and security without neglecting justice and fairness across nations". If indeed I have made a contribution in those terms then, truly, I am humbled.

Peace *and* justice; security *and* fairness. These principles are my subject today as they informed my endeavours as Secretary-General of the United Nations. It is important to stress that the second principle is not a caveat upon the first. Justice is intrinsic to the maintenance of peace, not incidental. And there will be no genuine security without fairness. The central fact of the world we have made is that we have joined up its most distant outposts. The world is closer together than ever before; incidents in one part of the globe travel quickly. This process has been beneficial for many nations and even for some of the poorest of the world. But there are losers too and our task is to be vigilant on behalf of those for whom justice has yet to be attained, for whom a fair deal is still nothing but a distant hope.

If anyone was ever disposed to doubt the extent and depth of globalization, the financial crisis must surely have settled the matter. Poorly backed mortgages in the United States create convulsions on world stock markets and slow down economies all over the world. The lack of credit in the developed world means trade suffers everywhere. The reduced purchasing power of the consumer in the Western economies depletes the markets for goods from exporting nations in the East.

In all the turmoil, one may be tempted to question whether peace and social justice can walk hand-in-hand. I can hear the argument already. We have heard it many times before: let us fix the economic problem first. Only then will we think about poverty, only then will we look to educate the poor, only then will we defend human rights, only then will we act on climate change. These things are luxuries, desirable but unaffordable for now.

I repeat: justice is not just a desirable addition to peace. It is the foundation of peace. Fairness is not something we seek alongside order: without justice order is inconceivable. And we have seen how the violation of human rights in one nation can spillover and imperil the security of others.

We have made great progress in recent years. In this short century so far, the number of civil wars and inter-state conflicts has declined. There has been a rise in trade and aid and measurable progress toward the Millennium Development Goals. Good governance and human rights are more extensive.

But the progress is fragile. Every signal of hope can be matched with an incident of terror or pain. There is violent conflict in Northern Uganda, the Democratic Republic of Congo and in Darfur. Villages are being burned and rape and murder are commonplace. The downward spiral of Zimbabwe has been painful to behold. And the recent conflicts in Georgia, Afghanistan and the Middle East remind us of that when injustices remain unaddressed, intolerance and hatred take root, and breed violence and instability. Regrettably, in all regions of the world, we see that human rights are selectively invoked rather than universally protected.

These incidents should not still our optimism but they show how much more we have to do. The journey ahead of us has four stages, four interconnected issues which, if we do not tackle them, we will secure neither justice nor peace.

First, we need progress, real progress, on global development, on achieving the Millennium Development Goals, where we are lagging badly behind. Second, we need to keep tackling the global food crisis even in difficult economic times. Third, we need to make progress on climate change to ensure the burden does not fall on the poor. And, fourth, for all these issues, we need effective institutions of good governance in every country and at the international level. Governance that is accountable, based on the rule of law and respect for human rights.

II: Development and the MDGs

The greatest challenge we face is simple to state yet intractably difficult to treat: too many people live too poorly. In 2005, 1.4 billion people lived in absolute poverty (on \$1.25 a day or less). Ten million people die of hunger and hunger-related diseases every year.

We know that problems always cluster around poverty. The poor are more likely to suffer appalling disease, more likely to be short of food, more likely to have their rights denied, more likely to be deprived of opportunity and hope.

The world issued its clarion call at the start of this millennium. The Millennium Declaration and the commitment to achieve the Millennium Development Goals was a bold statement that this situation cannot be allowed to continue.

And we have made some progress. The relief of debt has been impressive. Writing off huge debts has allowed countries to invest the money in real improvement for their citizens. But we can do better still. We can provide debt relief faster and we can extend it to more countries.

Inflation is lower today in many countries than in living memory. 27 African economies are projected to grow by more than 5 per cent this year. Foreign direct investment has increased

more than 200 per cent in the past five years. Exports are rising. There have been encouraging initiatives on aid and investment.

The number of children enrolled in primary school has increased by a third since the turn of the century. The enrolment of girls is now growing. AIDS victims are living longer and more productive lives. Maternal mortality is falling. There is more safe drinking water than before. We have seen how limited, even low-cost, interventions—like fighting malaria with bed nets – can make dramatic improvements.

But we cannot say in all conscience that we are yet doing as much as we must. Africa, for example, is not on target to achieve the MDGs. Unless we now have an unprecedented effort, the commitment made at Gleneagles to double aid by 2010 will not be met. There is also a risk that countries use the financial crisis as a pretext to weaken their commitment to the target of spending 0.7% of their GDP on aid. Already, there are worrying signs.

We must remember that the impetus for these commitments came from below – from the pressure of millions of people that persuaded the G8 leaders to make the promises they did. Now these promises must be redeemed, in full.

II. The Food Crisis

If development assistance is critical in the short-run, it is only with a dependable source of food that the developing world can sustain itself in the long-run.

We face an imminent and pressing challenge over the cost and supply of food. The price of staple foods is soaring. Demand from the growing economies is increasing. The high cost of oil is affecting transport costs and there has been an impact of bio fuel production on the cost of food.

It is the poor who suffer the consequences hardest because it is the poor for whom food takes up the greatest share of the household budget. The Food and Agricultural Organisation has warned that over half of the countries worst affected by the current crisis are in Africa. Without immediate action, we are certain to see – indeed are already seeing - many thousands more deaths directly or indirectly through malnutrition.

Shortage of food, unfortunately, is nothing new in Africa. Africa is the only continent that cannot feed itself.

Away from the high-profile famines, there has been a silent hunger in many parts of rural Africa now for 30 years. Africa's population keeps increasing but agricultural yields have stagnated for the last forty years. With depleted soils, the lowest use of fertilizer in the world and poor crop varieties, grain yields in Africa are a quarter of the global average. Less than five per cent of Africa's cultivated land benefits from irrigation. The rate of de-forestation is 200% higher than the global average.

That is why we need a green revolution in Africa, transforming every aspect of farming on the continent. African farmers need better seeds, soils, and prices for what they sell. They need access to water, to fertilizers, to markets and credit. They need support from their Governments and the wider international community to accelerate rural economic growth. This transformation is the aim of the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa – AGRA – which I chair.

It also needs to be said that, even if agricultural practices in Africa were revolutionized, the rules of the global economy would still place it at a disadvantage. Trade negotiations have now been deadlocked for three years. Good access to markets, fair terms of trade and a non-discriminatory financial system are essential.

Protectionism heralds a false promise in its name – there will be no protection of the poor if rich nations use the downturn as a pretext to erect walls behind which they can shelter. Too many nations preach the theoretical virtues of free trade but then act to withhold its benefits from the rest of the world. The unfair restrictions and practices we have in place are holding back development, especially in Africa.

I therefore welcome the proposal by the President of the European Commission, Mr. Barroso to transfer one billion Euros in unused European farm subsidies to African farmers. This is an example of the global solidarity we need.

III. Climate Change

Of course, changes to the land are taking place in an environment that is changing too. Climate change imperils the world's food supply, as rising temperatures and prolonged drought render fertile areas unfit for grazing or crops. It endangers the very ground on which nearly half the world's population live – in coastal cities – which face inundation from sea levels rising as a result of thermal expansion of oceans due to warming, as well as from melting icecaps and glaciers. It is destroying vital ecosystems such as forests and coral reefs.

There can no longer be any doubt that the climate is changing and that we are changing it. Neither responsibility for the change nor the consequences of the change are shared equally. Climate change is, for the most part, an unwelcome visitor on the rest of the world from the developed nations. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has warned that though it is not doing the polluting, Africa will pay the most severe price.

Africa's great lakes—Victoria, Tanganyika and others—are shrinking. As global weather patterns have changed, crops in Africa have failed. Yields will decline. Agricultural productivity in parts of Africa could fall by as much as 50% by 2050.

Other continents can survive such a fate. Africa cannot.

The next big moment in this argument will soon be upon us. Soon the world will convene in Copenhagen, to begin the negotiations that will succeed the Kyoto treaty. The Alliance for Climate Justice, launched by the Global Humanitarian Forum in Geneva, has set out the clear principle on which this debate must proceed: the polluter must pay.

We need to set appropriately differentiated, but binding emissions targets for polluters. The agreement must allow for substantial polluter-financed support and compensation to the poorest and most vulnerable in the world. Every nation that is emitting pollution into the atmosphere today must bear the costs of that action. It is not good enough to point to the dirty industrialization of two hundred years ago as though that gave cover to polluters today.

We cannot wait for the actions of politicians to work through the system. The consequences of climate change are visible now. This is not a problem that will suddenly emerge at some point in the future. Climate change is affecting the lives and livelihoods of people right now – it has human face.

We need to accelerate the process by which the poorest nations can be helped to adapt to the consequences of climate change. Development and land use policies need to be changed to avoid low-lying coastal areas. Natural and artificial coastal barriers need to be developed to protect against tide surges and storms. Vulnerable populations need to be relocated. The water supply infrastructure needs to be improved. We need drought-resistant agriculture and steps taken to control desertification. We need to develop public health plans because water-borne diseases are becoming more common.

IV. Stronger multi-lateral institutions

I have set out three vast and complex problems: development, food supply and climate change. All three challenges require international co-operation. All three have assumed my fourth point – that we have accountable government at national level, based on the rule of law and the respect for human rights. And all three move beyond national borders. They all require multi-national chambers.

Once again, the case for optimism has plenty of evidence. Military coups were once the norm in Africa. Now they are the exception. Command and control has been replaced by the ballot box. The political empowerment of women is on the rise, such that Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, of Liberia, has become the first woman ever elected President of an African state. Throughout Africa, civil society and ordinary citizens also are engaged as never before.

In the international arena, the establishment of the International Criminal Court and the work of the UN tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, as well as the mixed ones in Sierra Leone and Cambodia, has led to concrete action in bringing to justice the perpetrators of the worst international crimes. These tribunals have demonstrated the will of the international community to punish gross violations of human rights. Indeed, the International Criminal Court holds the promise of universal justice, whereby no official, no commander or general, or indeed no head of state can commit these crimes with the expectation of impunity. I cannot overstate the importance of this principle. The fact that, for the most serious crimes, there will be a reckoning is a foundation of peace and security.

When we are faced with crimes of the scale seen in the early 1990s in Rwanda and Bosnia, we cannot shut our eyes. As an international community we must step in, through the United Nations Security Council. The international community should step in only when the national authority has manifestly failed in its responsibility to protect its own people from genocide, ethnic cleansing or other crimes against humanity. National sovereignty can no longer be used as a shield by governments intent on massacring their own people.

We must argue, consistently and everywhere in the world, for government based on the rule of law. Leaders must ensure that the rules are respected—that they protect the rights and property of individual citizens. Those leaders must then hold themselves to the same rules. They cannot be above the law. And every nation that proclaims the rule of law at home must respect it abroad and every nation that insists on it abroad must enforce it at home.

At the International level, developing countries must have a stronger voice in multi-national chambers. We have moved from a world dominated by the stand-off between two hostile super-powers to a world of many poles. We are seeing shifts in economic power and shifts in political power will follow: these changes need to be reflected in institutions for global governance. The era of the privileged elite of nations in, for the example, the club of the G8, is drawing to a close. Those nations that wield this power have to find a graceful way to yield it or to share it. And by doing so, they will ensure better security for themselves and others.

The UN Security Council is an obvious example of an Institution which must change. Its membership still reflects the reality of 1945, not 2008. The Security Council cannot be just another stage on which to act out national interests. It has to be the management committee, if you will, of our fledgling collective security system. It does not today reflect the world we live in and it must. The other multi-national institutions need to change too. The IMF, the World Bank, the G8 – they all need to ensure their decision making processes include the

voices of developing countries, without which questions and concerns about their legitimacy and authority will continue

V. Conclusion

Human rights and the rule of law, like peace and security, is a prerequisite to strong and sustained development. And without prosperity and opportunity that are widely shared, peace cannot last long and democratic institutions cannot truly flourish.

These ideas are rooted in the UN Charter, whose preamble expresses the determination of the peoples of the United Nations to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, establish conditions under which justice and the rule of law could be maintained, and promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom. Freedom from want, freedom from fear and freedom to live in dignity go hand in hand.

I want to end on a note of optimism. I believe in the capacity of human beings to change their world for the better. Globalization is not a force of nature that cannot be resisted, like the movement of the wind or the tides. It is an active human process, shaped by us, for our own ends. There is thus a constant argument about how to write justice into the script.

I believe that peace and security can be achieved and sustained. We need to ensure the attention of the world is focussed on the development of the poorest nations, governed always by the rule of law and respect for human rights.

We have it within our power to make certain that the poor have at least the opportunity to share the prosperity that globalization offers. In the longer-term it is not sustainable for immense wealth and extreme poverty to live side by side.

This is the task for all of us, for me certainly, but also for you. As you contemplate heading out into the world to make your way, reflect on what you can do to help. To help the poorest in the world to help themselves is a task from which none of us is exempt. The great virtue of youth is its optimism that the world can be changed, for the better. It is a shame that so many people lose this belief, for it is the foundation of progress. Do not believe that nothing can be done. Do not let anyone, in the name of realism, quench the optimism you feel. The world can change and you, we, can change it.

Ladies and gentlemen, my sincere thanks to all of you for the award of this prestigious degree and for your courtesy in listening to my remarks today.

Le groupe Yvostellka en quelques mots

Yvostellka est connu pour la fraîcheur, la sensibilité et la spontanéité de ses concerts. Musiques d'Europe de l'Est, des Balkans, airs Klezmer et folk irlandais sont les terrains de jeux favoris de ce groupe qui marie émotions et qualité musicale pour le plus grand plaisir de son public.

Du trio originel composé en 1999 d'**Yvonne**, **Christelle** et **Katia**, le groupe évolue au fil des concerts, des enregistrements et des années. Marco et François complètent l'ensemble en 2001, avant qu'Yvonne ne quitte le groupe en 2006 et laisse place à Estelle. Les regards complices témoignent de l'amitié sincère qui soude la troupe.

Violon, flûte traversière, accordéon, contrebasse, guitare, cajon, tapan, derbouka, reqq, ... tous ces instruments sont intimement liés pour créer la sonorité unique et chaleureuse d'Yvostellka.

<http://yvostellka.com/>