

THE POWER OF IDEAS

*Reflections on
Peace, Development and Governance*

Dr. Óscar Arias Sánchez

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Dr. Oscar Arias Sánchez

Nobel Peace Prize 1987

President of Costa Rica

1986-1990

2006-2010

Oscar Arias Sánchez was born in San José, Costa Rica on September 13, 1940. He completed his primary studies at the República Argentina School in Heredia and his secondary studies at the Saint Francis School, in Moravia. Subsequently, he studied Law at the University of Costa Rica and obtained his Ph.D. in Political Science at the University of Essex, England. After returning to his country, he served as professor of Political Science at the University of Costa Rica and, since then, has been linked to academic activities at some of the most prestigious universities in Europe and the United States of America.

He belonged to the National Liberation Party (PLN) from his youth and in 1970 he was called to public function by President José Figueres Ferrer, who appointed him as Minister of National Planning and Economic Policy (1970-1974). He continued to occupy that position in the administration of President Daniel Oduber (1974-1978). He resigned from that position to aspire to a seat in the Legislative Assembly, being elected as a parliamentarian (1978-1982).

A year later, he was appointed Secretary General of the PLN and this same party appointed him as a candidate for the Presidency of the Republic for the period 1986-1990. His electoral triumph was motivated by the promise to fight for peace in Central America, then ravaged by bloody political and military conflicts. Guatemala and El Salvador were immersed in civil wars that had dragged on for a long time. In Nicaragua fall of the dictatorship of the Somoza family, and the subsequent seizure of power by the Sandinista National Liberation Front, created in the region a climate of confrontation that it threatened to reach the Costa Rican borders. Political instability in the region was exacerbated by the ideological and proxy military confrontations between the Soviet Union and the United States of America during the Cold War.

It is in this context that Dr. Oscar Arias proposed to the five Presidents of the Central American republics the Peace Plan that bears his name and that was signed in Guatemala in August 1987. The said plan was the basis of a lasting peace and a slow but inexorable democratization process in the Central American region. In recognition of his efforts, the Norwegian Nobel Committee awarded him the Nobel Peace Prize in 1987. This award, which was invaluable support for the consolidation of peace processes in the region, also allowed Dr. Arias the creation of the Arias Foundation for Peace and Human Progress, an institution that has been dedicated to promoting causes such as demilitarization, control of small arms and light weapons, gender equality and democratic governance.

After several years of staying out of national politics, Dr. Arias agreed to nominate his name, once again, for the 2005 presidential campaign. Thanks to his commitment to “put Costa Rica on the road again,” it turned out elected President of the Republic for the period 2006-2010, becoming the first head of state awarded the Nobel Peace Prize to be reelected. His second administration gravitated around the fight against poverty, the expansion of the educational system and the insertion of Costa Rica in international markets, with the signing of Free Trade Agreements with the United States of America, Central America and the Dominican Republic. China, Singapore, Panama and the European Union, as well as the opening of state monopolies in insurance and telecommunications.

Internationally, President Arias also promoted at the United Nations General Assembly the text of an Arms Trade Treaty (ATT).

This treaty aims to prohibit the international trade of arms when there is evidence that they will be used to commit atrocities, genocides or crimes against humanity; or when there are clear indications that they will be used to alter sustainable development, violate human rights or International Law. The Arms Trade Treaty entered into force in 2014 and has already been ratified by 83 countries. The ATT ranks among the greatest contributions that Costa Rica has made to humanity. He also promoted the environmental initiative known as Peace with Nature and the so-called Consensus of Costa Rica, a mechanism to forgive debts and support with international financial resources developing countries that invest more and more in the protection of the environment, the health, education and housing for their peoples, and less and less in arms and soldiers. Along with these causes, President Arias promoted a visionary foreign policy, establishing diplomatic relations with China, Cuba and with several moderate Arab countries.

Among some of President Arias's many publications are: *Con velas, timón y brújula* (first edition, 2010), *Hagamos juntos el camino* (2005), *Horizontes de paz* (1990), *Frieden Für Zentralamerika -Paz para Centroamérica-* (1987), *Nuevos rumbos para el desarrollo costarricense* (1980); *Los caminos para el desarrollo de Costa Rica* (1977), *Democracia, independencia y sociedad latinoamericana* (1977), *¿Quién gobierna en Costa Rica?* (1976), *Grupos de presión en Costa Rica* (1970) y *Significado del movimiento estudiantil en Costa Rica* (1970).

Oscar Arias has received around 88 honorary doctorates from different universities in the United States of America, such as Harvard, Princeton, Dartmouth, Washington University and Brandeis, as well as from other prestigious educational institutions, such as the University of Salamanca in Spain, Bahcesehir in Turkey, Yonsei in Japan, Kyung Hu in South Korea and Essex in England. He has also received numerous awards, including the Martin Luther King Jr. Peace Prize, the Philadelphia Medal of Freedom, the Jackson Ralston Prize, the Prince of Asturias Prize, the Albert Schweitzer Humanitarian Prize and the Prize of the Americas. For him, however, there is no more important award than the immense love he has received from his people.

Introduction

In the aftermath of the Second World War, the allies published a poster with a phrase that some attribute to British General Bernard Montgomery. The statement read: *"We won the war, now let's us win the peace"*. Such statement spoke to the need to reconstruct a new world order to prevent the tragedy of another global armed conflict that represented a human, economic, social, and environmental tragedy like planet Earth had not seen before. The wisdom in such statement resides in the recognition that peace is not a passive concept, but rather an active one. Peace must be constantly constructed, forged, and maintained. Achieving peace entails cooperation by all stakeholders concerned both at national and international level.

Since the 1940s, our planet has not yet suffered a war of such epic proportions as the Second World War. However, evidently, humanity is still far from winning the peace. This is true in many ways. The Cold War, which in fact was ardently fought in many developing countries, was in part a manifestation of a competition for supremacy among world superpowers. The fall of the Soviet Union, albeit terminating a bi-polar world order, led to a more fragmented world which today is very susceptible to armed conflicts at regional and national level. In addition to existing armed conflicts, planet Earth is today plagued with other types of deep economic, social, and environmental challenges generating tensions that urgently need closer international cooperation.

Today, the need for international cooperation to win the peace is as pressing as never before. Technology and globalization have brought closer societies across geographically distant continents. Increasing economic, social, and environmental interaction entail higher risks of political friction, and thus, greater risks for international conflict. And yet, paradoxically, in the beginning of the second decade of the XXI century, we are witnessing not only wars, but also how the international institutions that must be instrumental to enable nation States to win peace among themselves are being gradually strangled by increasing nationalistic pressures. For different reasons, a rule-oriented system attempting to guide international political, economic, and environmental affairs is dangerously being eroded by unilateral policies of governments of developed and developing countries alike.

It is within this context, that the Institute of Malaysian and International Studies of the National University of Malaysia (IKMAS) is publishing this book. This publication is a compilation of a set of essays and key- note speeches by Dr. Oscar Arias Sánchez, former President of Costa Rica for two times and Nobel Peace Laureate. This collection of essays, which were originally written in Spanish, have been translated into English to make them accessible to a wider audience. Although written almost two decades ago, the topics and arguments addressed by President Arias in this book remain as current as ever.

This book is divided in four parts, each one emphasizing a key topic of President Arias' vision of the world. Part one focuses on peace and the key systemic elements necessary to attain it. One of such elements is the need to stop the absurdity of the current arms race in times where mankind needs more resources to achieve better standards of living. Part two focuses on democracy as a key element for freedom for people. Part three centers around governance and development, and the need for political leaders to be humble, recognize policy mistakes of the past, reject populism and have the courage to rectify and take difficult yet critical decisions required for sustainable economic development. Finally, part four centers on what President Arias' calls "peace with nature", which speaks to the need to prioritize environmental protection for the sake of mankind, especially for those generations yet to be born.

A detailed biography of President Arias is included in this book. However, in we had to summarize his contribution in just one paragraph, it could be said that between 1986 and 1990, during his first term as President, he was the architect of the Arias Peace Plan that made it possible to end the civil wars in Central America. He devoted himself so passionately to peace that he was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1987. During his second administration between 2006 and 2010, to highlight one of his many achievements, he convinced the people of Costa Rica to ratify the Free Trade Agreement with the United States by referendum. Together with the Association Agreement with the European Union also negotiated during his second term, these free trade agreements advocated by President Arias have contributed to allow Costa Rica to migrate from being a commodity exporter to become a supplier of high-tech manufacturing and sophisticated services exports. Indeed, as recent as the mid-1990s, more than 60 percent of Costa Rican exports consisted in coffee and bananas. Today, Costa Rica is an exporter of more than four thousand different products in which high-tech manufacturing and services represent the lion share. These policies have left Costa Ricans

with a country, that albeit still facing critical development challenges, can nevertheless boast of an enviable natural environment and a human development index among the top in Latin America.

The ideas expressed by Oscar Arias in his essays gravitate around the topics of democracy, peace and disarmament, and the importance of trade for growth and sustainable development. These ideas to a great extent also reflect values that for a long time have colored the idiosyncrasy of Costa Rica. Peace, disarmament, protection of nature and the need to harness trade and globalization for development are postulates that, albeit with different levels of success, have been implemented in Costa Rica over the last century. Costa Rica unilaterally abolished its army in 1948, devoting its scarce financial resources to education, health, and development, enabling it to rank among the top of the UNDP human development index of the developing world. With less than 0.03 percent of the earth's surface --the country has only 51,100 km²--, Costa Rica contains nearly 6 percent of the world's biodiversity, and more than one fourth of its total land area is protected under natural reserves.

Although Costa Rica and Malaysia are practically in geographically in opposite sides of the globe, despite their important differences, both countries have important aspects in common. Both societies have managed to live peacefully and lead by example due to their respect for cultural diversity. Both countries host a significant share of the planet's biodiversity, and in the economic policy front, both countries have been quite successful in starting to insert themselves in global value chains, yet the domestic debates about free trade and development continue.

With this project, lead by Profs. Dr. Sufian Jusoh and Dr. Roberto Echandi, IKMAS aims to contribute to its mission to be a research Centre of excellence on regional and transregional studies leading to an understanding of historical and contemporary transformation. IKMAS is devoted to Malaysian and International Studies within the framework of inter-regionalism, connectivity, and inclusive development. Within this context, this book purports to serve as a bridge between the ideas and experiences of Latin America and South East Asia, with a view to foster greater dialogue, debate, and peer learning among the academic and civil society of both regions with respect to key contemporary issues. More than ever, the existing challenges of today entail the need for academia and policy makers to assume their responsibility in contributing to win the peace of a world increasingly prone to conflict.

PART ONE

PEACE WILL KNOCK DOWN WALLS

A FUTURE AT THE SCALE OF OUR DREAMS

LXI GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE UNITED NATIONS
NEW YORK, UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
19 SEPTEMBER, 2006

“For better or for worse, our species writes down its history in draft, never too clearly, struggling, like each one of us, in a perpetual conflict between the best and the worst angels of our nature.”

I stand in this room filled with the same emotion and the same sense of urgency as when I did for the first time, twenty years ago. By then, I was burdened with the deepest grievances of my people. I came here to remind the world that, in the waist of America, five small nations were struggling between life and death, between freedom and oppression, between war and peace. I came to ask the international community not to let violence turn Central America into a barren land for the seed of the most beautiful human dreams.

The world has changed a great deal since then. The best sons of Central America no longer go to war, and our countries have ceased to be pawns in the planetary immense chess of the Cold War.

For anyone who comes from Central America, it is impossible to think that the all past time was better. I am convinced that humanity has its reasons to being optimistic and, as William Faulkner said, man will prevail. However, I also know that all progress made in the direction of people's freedom, dignity and wellbeing are just small victories in an epic and long-term struggle. The road to the full realisation of human beings has barely begun, and it is fraught with obstacles.

If we are to keep on the road to human emancipation against misery, if we are to turn development and human rights into something more than the utopia they are today for hundreds of millions of individuals worldwide, we require more than just good intentions. We require courage to call things by their name, to rectify wrong courses and to make urgent decisions.

With optimism and fervour, I propose that this Assembly takes, today, three courses of action that may have powerful effects on the wellbeing of all people. Firstly, to denounce the increase in military spending, arms race and trade of arms as offences to the human condition. Secondly, to realise, through free trade, the promise implied by economic globalisation for all humanity and, in particular, for the poorer nations. Thirdly, to use our best efforts and eloquence to defend international laws and the United Nations, promoting any reforms that may allow them to successfully adapt to the huge changes the world is experiencing.

For a long time, I have held that the struggle for human development is linked to the causes of disarmament and demilitarisation. It is certainly not a badge of honour for our species that the global military spending has exceeded a trillion dollars in 2005, the same actual amount spent at the end of the Cold War, and eight times the annual investment amount that would be required to achieve, in one decade, *all* the Millennium Development Goals in *all* the countries of the world. The military investment presently made by the most industrialised countries in the planet, who are responsible for 83% of global military spending, is ten times higher than the resources allocated to provide official aid for development. In the case of the United States of America, the richest country in the world, that amount is at least 25 times higher. What is this, other than an eloquent sign of lost priorities and the deepest irrationality?

Because, ultimately, it all comes down to rationality. Ever since the tragic events of 11 September 2001, a bit more than \$200 billion was added to the world's military spending. There is not even one indication suggesting that this colossal increase is bringing the world a higher level of security and enjoyment of human rights. On the contrary, we are feeling more vulnerable and more fragile every time. Maybe it is time to imagine other uses for these resources. Maybe it is time to learn that with far less than this sum, we could ensure access to drinking water and primary education for every individual in the world, and we might even have some money left, as once suggested by Gabriel Garcia Marquez, to perfume Niagara Falls with sandalwood on an autumn day. Maybe it is time to understand that this would probably make us feel safer, and certainly happier.

Each weapon is a visible sign of the postponement of poor people's needs. It is not just me who says this. This was memorably expressed by a man of arms, President Eisenhower, already half a century ago:

“Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed. This world in arms is not spending money alone. It is spending the sweat of its labourers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children.”

But while it is sad that the wealthiest nations, through their military spending, are denying development opportunities for the poorer ones, it is even worse that these poorer nations become accomplices in the destruction of their own future. In fact, it is tragic that the governments of some of the most underdeveloped countries continue to equip troops, purchase tanks, planes and missiles, supposedly to protect a population that is being consumed in hunger and ignorance.

My region is not an exception to this phenomenon. In 2005, Latin American countries spent almost \$24 billion in arms and troops, and this amount has increased by 25% in real terms over the last decade, with a significant growth during last year. Latin America has started a new arms race, although it has never been as democratic as it is today, and although there have been virtually no military conflicts between countries over the past century.

In this sense, I believe that we Costa Ricans have the right to feel proud. Since 1948, thanks to the vision of a wise man, former President Jose Figueres, Costa Rica has abolished the army, declared peace to the world, and made a bet on life. Just as I did twenty years ago in my first message to this General Assembly, today I am pleased to say that I come from a place with no weapons; that our children have never seen a tank, and they do not have the concept of a helicopter gunship, a warship, or a cannon. I can tell you that, in my country, parents and grandparents explain the quaint architecture of certain schools to the youth, by telling them stories that bear witness of how, many years ago, those schools were war quarters. I can tell you that, in my motherland, none of its children, man or woman, knows oppression, and that there is not a single Costa Rican who travels to exile. I can tell you than mine is a nation of freedom.

This is a path that neither my country nor I are willing to abandon. Not only that: we want this path to be the path of all humanity. For this reason, I have an idea to propose to you today. I propose that we should all follow the Costa Rica Consensus, to create mechanisms aimed at cancelling debts and supporting with international financial resources

those developing countries that invest more in education, health and housing for their people, and less in arms and soldiers. It is time that the international financial community rewards not only those who spend in an organised way, as it has done so far, but also those who spend ethically.

I also propose to approve, as soon as possible, an Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) to prohibit countries from trading arms to any state, group or individual whenever there is sufficient reason to believe that those arms will be used to violate Human Rights or the International Law, or whenever there are clear signs that those arms might be used to alter the sustainable development.

I hope that the United Nations, in this period of sessions held by its General Assembly, agrees on the formation of a government group of experts to prepare a binding international arms trade treaty.

While it is time to close the doors to arms trading and its infinite aftermath of death, it is also time to open doors widely to another type of trading, this is, the legitimate and lawful exchange of goods and services, on which people's prosperity depends.

I know there is a wide range of opinions in this room about the best ways to reach a greater global exchange and provide true opportunities to all countries. In times of globalisation, the dilemma faced by developing countries is both simple and harsh: if they are unable to export increasing amounts of goods and services, they will end up exporting more and more people.

The strongest argument in favour of economic opening is simply that it helps to diminish poverty. Sometimes, I am amazed at the tenacity with which some insist in the fact that globalisation is a perverse force that is increasing poverty in the world. On the contrary, according to data of the World Bank, the number of poor people worldwide was reduced by 200 million over the past two decades, largely as a result of what happened in China and India, two countries that have embraced globalisation and trade opening with a particular zeal.

Therefore, commercial liberalisation may be defended on its merits and due to its beneficial effects on poorest people. If we actually want to rise to the ethical challenge of reducing poverty in the world, wisdom and prudence must prevail so that the Doha Round can reach a successful completion. However, I want to stress the fact that the defence of free trade must be honest and consistent. It must seek a business exchange

that is, in effect, equally free for all countries. The practice of developed countries of pushing for the elimination of trade barriers only in those sectors where they have clear comparative advantages is not ethically defensible. We developing countries also need, and demand, free trade in agriculture. Until we make progress in this issue, we will have to continue paraphrasing George Orwell's famous words: (in free trade) we are all equal, but some are more equal than others.

Developing countries need help to achieve development and solidarity from the part of industrialised countries but, most of all, what we need from them is consistency. If they advocate for free trade, then let it be free, indeed. If they defend and practice admirable forms of social justice in their countries by means of welfare states, they should put a piece of that philosophy into practice at an international scale. If they promote and practice the democratic creed along their borders, they should help to bring about a more balanced distribution of powers in international organisations.

In fact, the third great challenge I want to raise today is to reinforce global governance and reform its institutions. This task begins with the defence of multilateralism, and with the strict adherence of all countries to International Law and to the fundamental principles of the Charter of the United Nations, the most elementary safeguard against anarchy in the world. Without an army, Costa Rica may be the country most in need for an effective international system in place to ensure its security. The most powerful countries on Earth need to understand that the survival of international laws and of the United Nations is essential for their own security. They must see that the mere existence of this forum is one of the greatest achievements of our species; that it is a victory of hope over fear, of tolerance over fanaticism, of reason over force.

Standing today in this room, how I would love to hear once again the powerful voice of John F. Kennedy, saying to the world, as he did back in 1961:

"To that world assembly of sovereign states, the United Nations, our last best hope in an age where the instruments of war have far outpaced the instruments of peace, we renew our pledge of support—to prevent it from becoming merely a forum for invective—to strengthen its shield of the new and the weak—and to enlarge the area in which its writ may run."

That is the kind of globalisation capable of transforming the lives of all humans for the better: a globalisation where all countries are, as we are here, equal in our rights; where all nations make their voices heard and hear the voices of the others, where the exercise of the tolerance that we witness on a regular basis in this room becomes the rule, not the exception.

The great British writer Aldous Huxley once wondered if maybe this world was another planet's hell. I do not think so. This world is but a prodigious and complex place, inhabited by a species that is barely reaching its infancy and that, as an infant, has only begun to grasp its huge powers to create and destroy.

For better or for worse, our species writes down its history in draft, never too clearly, struggling, like each one of us, in a perpetual conflict between the best and the worst angels of our nature. Amid this conflict, the victories of human spirit, however certain, are always incomplete, gradual, tentative and subject to setbacks. Earth is not hell, it is rather a place where perfection does not, and will never, prevail, but in its place, there is some level of goodness and greatness splashed with miseries, errors and sorrows.

The indisputable achievements of the past twenty years suggest that, in spite of its regrets, mankind continues its upward march. But the time has come to rectify costly mistakes, correct wrong courses and abandon destructive customs that will make that march infinitely more uncertain and steeper than it should be.

If we do not face military spending and arms trade today; if we fail to stimulate the poorest countries to invest their resources in life instead of death; if we do not overcome the fears and hypocrisy that prevent the existence of a truly free trade worldwide; if we do not strengthen the international institutions and regulations which may protect us against global anarchy; if we fail to do all this, we will condemn our species to walk along a cliff's edge, to live in the wheel of eternal return, retracing our steps, like Sisyphus, after each summit reached.

I believe that optimism must be matched with the steadiness and the will to change. I believe that it is time for humanity to build a future at the scale of its best dreams.

PEACE CAN ONLY BE POSSIBLE THROUGH MEMORY

LXIII PLENARY MEETING OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF
THE UNITED NATIONS
NEW YORK, UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
24 SEPTEMBER 2008

“Just like the old protagonist of a story by Charles Dickens, let us open our eyes to our past, our present and our future; we must secure peace and justice for the past, peace and development for the present, peace and nature for the future.”

I have come here with the words of urgency that any leader must utter in critical times of history. This is not just any year. While we are holding this General Assembly, millions of people who were previously able to meet their most basic needs, have now been thrown back to poverty. Hunger, that abominable monster which we have let escape for so many years, is chasing away the dreams of humanity once again. Pessimism and hopelessness have taken over our economies, and those who have less will be the ones to pay the consequences, as they always do. Military spending ascends to \$3,300 million a day, but international aid is still trickled through the poorer countries, while the middle-income countries barely get it at all. Harsh hurricanes and intense droughts remind us that the planet reacts to our irrationality, and that we might be in a countdown to destruction if we do not do something to change it.

This General Assembly is possibly the one dealing with the most global issues ever. Our interdependence has made us all vulnerable; but there, also, lies our strength. Yesterday, a nation could overlook the suffering of others, or minimise their grief. Today, that is no longer an option. All victories—and all failures—are shared. The man who cuts down a tree out of hunger in the virgin Amazonian rainforest is unknowingly taking some of the oxygen we all breathe in this room. The European mother who was forced to buy less food because she is out of money is unknowingly affecting the economy of all the nations in the

world. The African child who drops out of school for lack of resources in unknowingly defining the future performance of our species. We are all together in this and, maybe for the first time in history, nobody can look the other way. We simultaneously stand as the accused and the accuser, sitting both in the public gallery and on the judge's chair. We have to seize this moment, as equality between nations is realised through the equality of their challenges.

We cannot face our realities without entirely knowing them. We cannot shed the light of reason to our planet if we leave whole regions in the dark on purpose. If we must seriously address the challenges of our time, it is only fair that, like Charles Dickens' protagonist, we open our eyes to our past, to our present and to our future; we must secure peace and justice for the past, peace and development for the present, peace and nature for the future.

In the Preamble of the UN Charter, the States comprised by this organisation have undertook to *establish conditions under which justice can be maintained*. Among these conditions, perhaps the most basic one is will. The will to enforce the fulfilment of obligations. The will to raise our voices against any infringements of the International Law. And, above all, the will not to overlook certain events that constitute an affront to all humanity.

Evil is enabled not only by action. It is also, and particularly, enabled by omission. Remaining silent when crimes are serious and responsibilities are clear does not mean being neutral but standing on the side of the aggressors. Our recent past is filled with horrendous crimes that went unpunished. They do not call for vengeance, but for justice. We cannot trivialise evil. If we do not want to repeat the painful stories of Kosovo and Bosnia, Rwanda and Kampuchea, then it is time for the international community to exert some pressure so that the crimes committed in Darfur may be brought before the International Criminal Court. Costa Rica will oppose any attempts to bypass this path, the path to peace. Because forgiveness is based on recalling, not on concealing; and peace will only be achieved through memory. As once said by Ellie Wiesel, we must understand that "*memory of evil will act as a shield against evil; memory of death will act as a shield against death.*"

If the spirit of the past drives us to demand accountability for the violation of human rights, the spirit of the present drives us to ensure their current observance. There are many ways in which Governments

can indirectly assault their people, and one of them is the excessive military expenditure. Particularly in developing countries, each long-range missile, each helicopter gunship, each war tank, is a symbol of the postponed needs of our people.

In a world where a sixth part of the population lives with less than one dollar a day, spending \$1.2 trillion in arms and soldiers is an offence and a symptom of irrationality, because security in a content world is more certain than security in an armed world. Latin America is not an exception to this phenomenon. Last year, the Latin American military expenditure amounted to \$39 billion, in a region that has never been as peaceful as democratic as it is today.

I cannot think of a greater distortion of values or biggest loss of priorities. With a small percentage of the global military expenditure, we could supply drinking water to all human beings, bring electric power to all homes, achieve global literacy, and eradicate all preventable diseases. I am not talking about the utopia of a world without armies. Unfortunately, time has not yet come for this idea to be realised. I am talking about minimum percentages of an expenditure that can be reduced without affecting a country's ability to defend itself, particularly in the case of developing countries.

For this reason, my Government has introduced the Costa Rica Consensus (*Refer to speech "A future at the scale of our dreams", 19/09/2006*). I am convinced that this will bring us more development, more security and more peace than all the money currently invested in our armies. Today, I humbly ask for your support in this initiative.

And I also ask you to support the Arms Trade Treaty (*Refer to speech "A future at the scale of our dreams", 19/09/2006*). The power of destruction of the 640 million small and light weapons existing in the world, mostly in the hands of civilians, deserves equal or greater attention than military spending.

But however urgent it is to secure the present development of our nations; it is also important to ensure their development in the times to come. The spirit of the future, as foreshadowed today, reveals a bleak picture, a picture of absolute destruction: that is the world awaiting us if we fail to do something right here and right now, to declare Peace with Nature (*Refer to speech "We will not renounce life in the planet", 10/07/2007*).

60 years ago, an illustrious Costa Rican, Mr. Jose Figueres, abolished the army in my country. What was formerly the Headquarters

of the Costa Rican armed forces, is today a National Museum. Our children, who have never seen a column of soldiers march, only know the marching of ant columns. No Costa Rican child knows the difference between this or that missile, this or that combat plane, but they can distinguish the trees in the forest and the animals in the sea, they know the importance of water cycles, and of energy supplied by the wind, the rivers and the sun. Ours is a nation of peace with human beings, but we also aspire to be a nation of peace with all forms of life.

We have undertaken to be carbon neutral by year 2021. Last year, we became the nation with the highest number of trees per capita and per square kilometre in the world, by planting 5 million trees. In 2008, we will plant another 7 million trees. We are leading an international crusade against global warming and the destruction of the environment, particularly of primary forests.

The march of humanity through history is not linear nor continuous. It is filled with detours and falls. It even has painful setbacks. Just like in the play by Pedro Calderon de la Barca, one morning we awake as princes and the next we are no more than beggars. But not all is a dream in life. There are concrete realities that we have managed to build. There are indisputable achievements in the history of mankind. This organisation is one of them. You may say that the United Nations is founded on the basis of the search for peace, the understanding between nations, and the respect of International Law. And all that is true. But I dare to say that, above all, this organisation is founded on the basis of hope. The hope that our march is upright, that our future is better, that there is a promised land behind the deserts of violence and injustice that we have so bravely managed to cross.

I can assure you that, if we face the spirit of our past, present and future; if we build peace from justice, development and nature; if we reject the oblivion, the arms race and the environmental destruction; we will someday reach that promised land, and our children—and the children of our children— will cease to be beggars in the kingdom of their dreams.

THE TEXT THAT SUSTAINS THIS EDIFICE

PRESIDENCY OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL
UNITED NATIONS ORGANISATION
NEW YORK, UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
19 NOVEMBER 2008

“To this day, Article 26 has been nothing but dead a letter in the vast cemetery of the intentions of peace in the world. However, in this room lies the possibility to revive it, to endow it with the content dreamt of by those who preceded us in this struggle.”

A curious story of the Norse mythology tells the misfortune of two kings who were doomed to fight each other forever, in such a way that if one was killed, he would rise again to keep on fighting until the end of times. The versions of this story vary but, in all of them, the kings and their armies resurrect every morning with new weapons, willing to start the battle once again. What was once a fantastic fabrication of a warrior culture became the painful premonition of the events that would mark the 20th Century history with blood. An escalation of weapons, enemies, threats and war that ended the lives of hundreds of millions of people, and that entrenched us in the corners of international insecurity.

It is in such a context that this Security Council was created: in the search for solutions to stop the endless battle of humankind, fed by the frenzy of the arms race. Probably, no organisation has ever been entrusted with a more ambitious task than this one. And, probably, no organisation has ever faced worse dilemmas as you have. Many of such dilemmas are still pending a solution, but an answer can certainly be found in the contents of the Charter of the United Nations.

In the year 1945, when the smoke of the worst war ever fought by humanity was still clearing, the founders of this Organisation wrote in Article 26 of the UN Charter: *“In order to promote the establishment and maintenance of international peace and security with the least diversion for armaments of the world’s human and economic resources, the Security Council shall be responsible for formulating, with the*

assistance of the Military Staff Committee referred to in Article 47, plans to be submitted to the Members of the United Nations for the establishment of a system for the regulation of armaments." The wording of this article is not innocent. It makes a judgment that must be understood by this Council in its entirety: the spending in armaments is a *diversion* of human and economic resources, meaning a destination that is different to the proper use of such resources. The Charter asks us to accept, at least, that excessive military spending entails an infinite opportunity cost.

This is not just a delusion of a citizen of the first country in history to abolish its army and declare peace to the world. Neither is it the wish to obtain a Nobel Peace Prize. It is the text that sustains this edifice. It is the text that justifies any course of action taken by this Security Council. To this day, Article 26 has been nothing but a dead letter in the vast cemetery of world peace intentions. However, in this room lies the possibility to revive it, to endow it with the content dreamt of by those who preceded us in this struggle.

"The least diversion of resources" means, above all, finding alternatives to the excessive military spending without affecting security. One such alternative is the strengthening of multilateralism. As long as nations do not feel protected by strong regional organisations with true ability to act, they will continue arming themselves at the expense of their people's development –particularly the poorest–, and at the expense of international security. The Security Council must endorse, as a guarantor of collective security, any multilateral agreements adopted by the different regional organisations. Costa Rica will struggle along this path over the next year, as a mechanism to create an environment conducive to the gradual reduction of military spending.

Ours is a disarmed nation. But not a naive one. We have not come here to push for the abolition of all armies. We have not even come here to push for a drastic reduction of global military spending, which currently ascends to \$3.3 billion per day. However, a gradual reduction is not only possible, but it is imperative. Especially for developing nations.

I am well aware that neither this Organisation, nor this Council, nor any of its members, may decide on how many resources the rest of the countries spend in arms and soldiers. But they can decide on how much international aid to provide and based on which principles.

The perverse logic that drives a poor nation to spend excessive sums in armies and not in people is the exact antithesis of human security, and it is ultimately a serious threat to the international security.

For this reason, my Government has introduced the Costa Rica Consensus (*Refer to speech "A future at the scale of our dreams", 19/09/2006*). This initiative intends to reward developing, poor or middle- income countries that *divert* increasingly less economic and human resources for the purchase of armaments, as required by Article 26 of the Charter of the United Nations. Today, I ask for your support, so we can make the Costa Rica Consensus a reality. I also ask you to support the Arms Trade Treaty (*Refer to speech "A future at the scale of our dreams", 19/09/2006*). I do not know how much longer we can survive without realising that killing many people, little by little, is as condemnable as killing many people, in one single day.

Costa Rica is not unaware of the fact that this Council comprises some of the countries that are at the top of the list of purchasers and sellers of small and light weapons. But it also knows that all these countries have recognised terrorism and drug trafficking as serious threats to international security. Global organised crime depends on arms trafficking, which has flowed with astonishing freedom through our borders to this day, with the permission of the very same nations that suffer its consequences. While this Treaty cannot prevent the existence of those groups, it will certainly limit their operations.

If we fail to adopt these measures, if the Costa Rica Consensus does not get support from the developed countries, if the Arms Trade Treaty sinks in the waters of this Organisation, the Millennium Development Goals will be nothing but the impossible dream of a world that, like Sisyphus, had relentlessly worked on a futile task. We strive to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger. Yet, armed conflicts constitute the main cause of famine in the world. We strive to improve health care, particularly maternal health and the struggle against AIDS and malaria. Yet, military spending takes away millions of dollars from the health budgets of poor countries. The Millennium Development Goals were brave words, but they will be nothing but words if we fail to regulate armaments or devise incentives to reduce military spending.

Humanity can break the curse that has forced it to spend centuries engaged in an incessant and fratricidal battle. Such was the belief of those who founded this Organisation. The magnitude of the mission

entrusted to this Council is not a failed expectation, but a path filled with thorns. Maintaining peace will never be an easy task. Neither will it ever be a finished task. But I can assure you that strengthening multilateralism, reducing military spending in favour of human development, and regulating the international arms trade, are all steps in the right direction that was traced 63 years ago by those who, having survived barbarism, were still able to harbour hope.

BECAUSE WE HAVE PROMISES TO KEEP

UNITED NATIONS ORGANIZATION
NEW YORK, UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
20 NOVEMBER 2008

“In my country, the dream of peace is no longer a dream. It is an ideal that has been turned into action, over many years of wise decisions. An ideal that was tested when the war surrounded our country in the 1980s. It is much more than words on a paper. It is present each morning in our daily work, in our streets, in our schools. We live it to the fullest. The dream of peace, the dream of wise investments, is alive in the heart of my people. I do not see any reasons why other countries, rich or poor, cannot share the same privilege.”

I feel proud to tell you about two specific actions taken by Costa Rica in the international scenario; actions that will help us steer our efforts to address the serious issues of violence and poverty that the world faces. But before we discuss actions, I would like to draw your attention to a few words for a moment.

It is because of words that we are here today. In stable governments around the world, the words written in their constitutions give leaders the power to rule and citizens the power to vote. Words created this organisation; they built the very roof of the United Nations that lies above us. Our founding documents may have been handwritten or printed on paper, they may have been kept in crystal cases or in adorned frames; but, in the end, when it comes to their most basic conception, they are nothing but promises: promises made by a nation, or a group of united nations, to their children.

When I was a child, I was made two promises connected with peace, security and armament control. One promise had the power to change my country, the other had the power to change the world. The promise to change the world is enshrined in Article 26 of the UN Charter. The words are very clear: *“In order to promote the*

establishment and maintenance of international peace and security with the least diversion for armaments of the world's human and economic resources, the Security Council shall be responsible for formulating, with the assistance of the Military Staff Committee referred to in Article 47, plans to be submitted to the Members of the United Nations for the establishment of a system for the regulation of armaments." In the Opera House of San Francisco, on 25 June 1945, delegates from 50 nations stood up to express their support to the Charter. In the name of all the children in the world, they stood up for armament control, which would also imply a reduced waste of essential resources and the opportunity to build a safer, stronger and more peaceful world.

I was barely 4 years old when this happened. I did not even suspect that a promise was being made, in my name, back there in San Francisco. Particularly because Costa Rica had its own issues at the time. My small and green country was about to arm itself to start a civil war that would play off one province against the other, one brother against the other. Costa Rica's promise arrived 3 years later, in 1948, when the war ended, and my country abolished its army. At that moment, Costa Rica promised me, and all other Costa Rican children, that it would invest its resources in tools for the future, not in weapons of the past; in schools and hospitals, not in barracks; in teachers and doctors, not in soldiers; in books and medicines, not in guns. It promised to dismantle the institutions of violence and to invest in the progress that makes violence unnecessary.

60 years later, Costa Rica has kept its promise to the boy I once was, and to all Costa Rican children. 60 years later, our investment in education and social security has yielded huge dividends. 60 years later, Costa Rican youths witnessed the time when our government made history, being able to enjoy prosperous and peaceful lives and to inherit a better future for their children and grandchildren.

Costa Rica has kept its promise. But the other promise I mentioned, the promise for the world, remained trapped in the piece of paper, limited to the words of Article 26. The Security Council has not honoured its mandate. The promise to regulate the arms trade and to wisely invest resources has not been fulfilled. Through this failure, we have stripped many people of the rights they should be enjoying.

We cannot simply leave our sense of guilt at the doorstep of this organisation; this is a failure shared by most nations. However, I truly

believe that the United Nations, as its founders also believed, is our greatest hope; not only to keep peace, but also to strengthen peace through the kind of investments that make it sustainable. Change must begin here, and two of the actions that will allow us to keep the promises of our past are still in our hands. One has a longer road ahead than the other, but both face a steep path before they can become a reality. The success of both of them is essential for our future. I am talking about the Arms Trade Treaty (*Refer to speech "A future at the scale of our dreams", 19/09/2006*), currently being analysed in these headquarters, and the Costa Rica Consensus (*Refer to speech "A future at the scale of our dreams", 19/09/2006*).

I have talked about our children and our grandchildren. The Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) is like a child to New York, and it has grown rapidly. In 1997, I met here with seven other Nobel Laureates to propose an International Code of Conduct on the arms trade. Thanks to kindred spirits and powerful allies around the world, this idea gathered speed; next month, the General Assembly of the United Nations will make a decision regarding the creation of a Group of Governmental Experts that will continue to prepare the treaty.

Given the international nature of the issue, it cannot be solved without international agreements. For the millions of individuals whose lives have been damaged or destroyed by violence, there is no option. For the rest of us, there is no excuse. There is a high level of resistance. Some argue that this Treaty infringes a nation's right to defend itself. But you and I know that no nation has the right to arm individuals, or groups of individuals, that intend to violate human rights. We must defend this fundamental truth and make sure that the ATT reaches the end of the road that it has been already traveling for some years.

Now, it is clear that the regulation of armaments is only a part of the promise included in Article 26. Its spirit also calls us to maintain peace "*with the least diversion possible of the world's human and economic resources*". If we seek to fulfil this wish, we must find the way to encourage nations so that they reduce their military spending, particularly in those regions where resources are scarce. For this purpose, my Government has introduced the Costa Rica Consensus.

Time has come for this idea to be realised. The international community has launched ambitious programmes to improve international aid and development, such as the Millennium Development

Goals. But we cannot start a new stage of international cooperation if we carry the burdens of the past, especially the burden of a military expenditure ascending to \$3.3 billion per day. Time has come for the international financial community to learn how to separate the wheat from the chaff; and to acknowledge, evidence in hand, which are the investments that result in an improved quality of life for humans, and which are not. The developed countries of the world cannot endorse, with assistance and resources, the decision of those who would rather equip their soldiers than educate their children. I hope that, with the support of some of the people present in this room today, we can make the dream of the Costa Rica Consensus come true. The two actions that I have described are nothing but common sense; however, there are many who oppose them and picture us as naive optimists. They say that it is unrealistic to talk about armament control or social investment. They say that the present world is too dangerous for this kind of dreams.

But history tells us otherwise. We have always managed to save hope from the claws of disenchantment. The best moments in the struggle for peace have always taken place in times of uncertainty and of fear. It happened in Costa Rica, when we abolished the army while the wounds of a revolution were still fresh. It happened in Pennsylvania, 145 years ago today, when Abraham Lincoln addressed his audience in the Gettysburg battlefield and spoke about hope for the future of survivors, even in the middle of the American Civil War. It happened in a shattered London, back in 1941, where a group of brave spirits signed a declaration of peace that sowed the seed of the United Nations. And it happened in a place identified just as “*somewhere at sea*”, when Churchill and Roosevelt found themselves on board of the U.S.S. Augusta to sign the Atlantic Charter. Amid the war, in the middle of the ocean, they promised to “*lighten for peace-loving peoples the crushing burden of armaments*”.

Today, we too are “*somewhere at sea*”. Neither the end of World War II nor the end of the Cold War have lightened our burden. Currents of violence shake us with fury. Waves of insecurity hit us ceaselessly. Our world is certainly dangerous, but it becomes even more dangerous through the actions of those who prefer economic profits over peace. It becomes even more dangerous with an unregulated river of armaments flowing to developing countries. It becomes yet more dangerous because of the cruel and perverse investment decisions, which ignore the poor, the sick, and the planet itself.

If we fail to face this reality with courage; if we do not listen to the words of those who cried out for peace amid war; if we fail to keep the promises made by our countries to their people; we would disappoint not only our children, but also our parents and our grandparents. We would disappoint those people whose sacrifice in the battlefield was aimed at ending that kind of sacrifice. We would disappoint people who, with black curtains on their windows and with the sound of war in their ears, pronounced brave words of peace and waited for those words to become a reality.

As President of my country, as a Nobel Peace Laureate, as President of the Security Council, but above all, as a Costa Rican, I can tell you that those visions from the past can still be realised. In my country, the dream of peace is no longer a dream. It is an ideal that has been turned into action, over many years of wise decisions. An ideal that was tested when the war surrounded our country in the 1980s. It is much more than words on a paper. It is present each morning in our daily work, in our streets, in our schools. We live it to the fullest. The dream of peace, the dream of wise investments, is alive in the heart of my people. I do not see any reasons why other countries, rich or poor, cannot share the same privilege". This is the message of Costa Rica. Whatever obstacles we find in the way, whatever interests oppose to us, this is a message that I will continue to proclaim as long as there is breath in my body, because that is the only way it may be heard. In this place of dialog and hope, we have no more promises to make. We only have promises to keep. And the power to do so is in our hands.

MAYBE THIS TIME. MAYBE

ARTICLE
27 APRIL 2009

“Where there is the same reason, there must be the same disposition”

On occasions, the course of humanity can shift almost imperceptibly. Impenetrable walls may crack one day and reveal a glimpse of what lies beyond. Insurmountable abysses can be bridged, and a rope can join two sides of a precipice. Unquestionable paradigms in politics and diplomacy can sometimes be tested for veracity. It does not happen often, but it does happen. Instants like these are the confirmation that human beings, with all their flaws and setbacks, may still be saved, may still build a better destiny, may still amend the mistakes that have condemned them to sadness, hatred and enmity in the past.

Something like this happened last week in Mexico, during the official visit of the American Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton. In her statements, Clinton claimed that the United States is co-responsible in the fight against drug trafficking in Mexico. She said that the Mexican Government must combat the production and trade of illegal drugs, but that the American Government must also acknowledge its guilt and undertake the task of putting up a harder fight against the consumption of these drugs by the American population, and against the arms trafficking flowing from the United States to the Mexican cartels.

These statements could seem obvious for those of us who live on this side of the hemisphere and for those who, to a greater or lesser extent, fight every day against the ravages of drug trafficking. But these statements establish a change of attitude in matters of American foreign affairs, a change that reveals a greater willingness to work together on the issues that afflict us. Until now, the term “co- responsibility” was almost banned from the language spoken in the sphere of continental diplomacy. Today, that has started to change.

No nation celebrates this change more than Costa Rica. For a country known for its pacifism and its struggle against the proliferation

of conventional and mass destruction weapons, it is promising to hear the Secretary of State of the most powerful nation in the world finally speak about international arms trafficking. For several years now, our country has led a crusade for the approval by the General Assembly of the United Nations of an International Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), to prohibit the transfer of arms to any States, groups or individuals whenever there are enough reasons to believe that those arms will be used to violate human rights or International Law.

This crusade has been fraught with obstacles and objections, but we have remained firm in our actions and sincere in our words. In November of this past year, before the representatives of the United States, France, England, Russia and China in the Security Council of the United Nations, I said: *“Costa Rica is not unaware of the fact that this Council comprises some of the countries that are at the top of the list of purchasers and sellers of small and light weapons. But it also knows that all these countries have recognised terrorism and drug trafficking as serious threats to international security. Global organised crime depends on arms trafficking, which has flowed with astonishing freedom through our borders to this day, with the permission of the very same nations that suffer its consequences”*.

How not celebrate Hillary Clinton’s acknowledgment that 90% of the weapons in the Mexican drug trafficking cartels come from the United States? How not celebrate her willingness to discuss about the best ways to stop this lethal trade? How not celebrate the fact that rationality seems to have arrived to power in the American nation? Because where there is the same reason, there must be the same disposition, and the world cannot keep condemning the drug-exporting countries while, at the same time, it applauds the countries that carry out an unregulated export of the arms that allow for the production and trade of those drugs.

I have devoted my life to struggling for peace. But it has not been simple. Peace is threatened by so many lies disguised as truths, by so many axioms that cannot be proven wrong! One of those axioms is the one that affirms that weapons always provide a greater level of security, particularly in the hands of civilians. Many have believed this truth to the letter, without realising that it has caused hundreds of guerrillas and terrorist groups to arise, thousands of drug traffickers and common criminals, who each year claim the lives of millions of individuals worldwide.

We are a pacifist country, not a naive one. We are not asking the world to completely abandon its addiction to arms. Sadly, the world does not seem to be ready for that. We are not asking the United States to ban the use of riffles and revolvers by its population, or to prevent the manufacture of weapons in its territory. We only ask them to help us regulate the trade of those weapons with the developing countries. We ask them to help us control the free circulation of arms into the criminal groups that threaten our lives and crush our dreams. The statements by Secretary Clinton give us reasons to harbour hope and to say, like Americans say, *“Maybe this time...”* Maybe the walls of thought will crack; maybe the abysses of reason will be bridged; maybe the paradigms of violence will be overthrown. Maybe this time. Maybe...

LET US NOT SQUANDER THE MIRACLE OF LIFE

LXIV GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE UNITED NATIONS
NEW YORK, UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
22 SEPTEMBER 2009

“Strengthening democracies, reducing military spending and cooperating to confront climate change constitute, perhaps, the most ambitious agenda that humanity has ever had to take on. Neither I, nor my Government, nor Costa Rica, will ignore this historic call. For we simply cannot fail. We cannot falter. We cannot back down when we are standing at the vanguard of 6.8 billion human beings.”

Mister President, I greet you on behalf of a country that is 35 times smaller than Libya, and infinitely different in scenery and geography. Instead of desert sandstorms, we receive torrential rains. We do not know the waves of the Mediterranean, but the capricious tides of the Caribbean. Their dunes are our forests, their mosques our cathedrals. But I believe that these differences are at the very heart of the United Nations. Aristotle posited that things are distinguished by what they look like. Here, in this room, nations appear alike precisely in the fact that they are all distinct, because each is unrepeatable in the vast catalogue of the planet. From the far reaches of this variety that brings us together, I wish you the greatest success in this General Assembly.

23 years ago, I spoke for the first time at this rostrum—a rock of reason amidst seas of insanity. At that time, I came here bearing the cries of millions of Central Americans who sought a peaceful solution to the civil wars that were lacerating our region. I came to ask the powerful nations to stop the flow of arms fuelling the procession of coffins in our territories. And I came to defend the right of Latin American nations to build their own destiny freely and democratically.

The second time I visited this room, I came seeking support for the Peace Plan that the Presidents of Central America had signed. In those

days, no one thought that little Central America would defy the world and choose life in the face of all threats. No one thought that we would have the strength to confront the powers of the Cold War and find our own solution to all our problems. No one thought that we would be able to sow the seeds of democracy in our lands and go on to work for the human development of our nations. We then gave the pessimists and the sceptics a lesson. We refuted with dreams the nightmares that many prophesied for us. Today, I come here to recognize the distance we have travelled, but also to warn of the risk of backsliding.

Since the last time I spoke before this Assembly, a Central American nation has seen the demon of the coup d'état awaken once again. Our region's armies have received almost \$60 billion to combat imaginary enemies, while our peoples have struggled empty-handed against the economic crisis. Some leaders have defied democratic rules in the most imaginative ways, while everything that was wrong in the continent has remained the same, or worse. Poverty has continued to afflict more than a third of our inhabitants. One in three Latin Americans teenagers still has never seen a high-school classroom. Hundreds of thousands of people have died of preventable diseases. The toll of violent deaths in some of our countries has exceeded those of countries at war, despite the fact that, with the exception of Colombia, there are no armed conflicts in our region. And millions of trees have been felled in territories that are collectively responsible for two thirds of the worldwide forest cover loss so far in the XXI century.

The scenario is not a hopeful one. For those of us from Latin America, it is difficult not to feel that we are always rescuing our future from the clutches of our past, and that we are always trying to take off on a runway where some foolish spilled oil, long ago. We still have not achieved greater development. We still have not made our democracy stronger. We still have not driven from our reality the shadow of militarism and oppression. These problems recur, to varying degrees, in the majority of developing nations —the very nations that will greatly bear the weight of the course of humanity over the next 50 years.

It is the developing nations that will shoulder the worst part of the struggle against global warming; the ones that will carry the heaviest burden of population growth on the planet; and the ones that will be responsible for accelerating the growth of a global economy, to which the rich cannot contribute much more than what they already generate.

We still ignore how the leading role we have been given will pay out. Our success or failure will depend on whether we have the courage to take on at least three fundamental challenges: the strengthening of our democracies; the encouragement of human development for our nations, through the reduction of military spending and cross-border arms trafficking; and the creation of a new international order for the transfer of aid, information and technology to combat climate change.

Developing nations, and middle-income nations in particular, live simultaneously in the Medieval and Postmodern eras. In our race to emulate the experiences of developed countries, we have skipped fundamental steps. There is no doubt that one of these steps is the patient construction of democratic institutions, on which developed countries have spent centuries; while we, if we have been lucky, have spent decades. As a result, we lack a true civic culture beyond superficial appearances. We have democratic structures that in many cases are no more than empty shells. We have free elections, but we lack a social forum open enough to allow all citizens make their political or ideological contribution. We have formal separation of powers, but in many places, power remains to be a single monopoly disguised in multiple public entities. We have rules of law, but the reach of the law is tested every day by Governments incapable of applying it, when not actually determined to weaken it. We have political constitutions and international treaties that reaffirm our belief in democratic values, but populations still prone to toss those values aside for material gain.

Paraphrasing the great Argentinean writer Jorge Luis Borges, we can say that most inhabitants of developing countries do not identify themselves with the State, which seems to them an abstract concept, removed from their immediate concerns. That is why they allow a Government to end before its constitutional period has elapsed, or to continue in power beyond that period. That is why they expect the Government to offer social welfare and public services, but they do not recognize the reciprocal obligations of citizens. That is why they prefer caudillos to political parties, the messianic leaders to democratic institutions. That is why they boycott the approval of new taxes, in countries whose tax burden is half or even a third of that of developed countries. That is why they so easily fall for a discourse that blames national problems on others, instead of assuming responsibility for designing mechanisms that confront them. And this is the best-case scenario, because in the worst there is no democracy at all.

As long as we continue on this path, placing our hopes in developing nations will be like pouring water into a sack. As long as we fail to dedicate more international attention, and more international cooperation, to strengthening and perfecting democracies in the world, we will watch once and again how our countries try to take off on a slippery runway.

This challenge is even more urgent in the face of an arms race that, year by year, moves \$1.3 trillion globally. The combination of strong armies and weak democracies has proved harmful in every corner of the planet, and above all in Latin America, which, during the second half of the twentieth century was a showcase of dictatorial horrors, fuelled by the existence of omnipresent military apparatuses. I will never tire of repeating this: in Latin America, and in a substantial portion of the developing world, armies have served no purpose other than to carry out coups d'état. They have not protected the people; they have oppressed them. They have not safeguarded liberties; they have trampled on them. They have not guaranteed respect for the will of the people; they have mocked it.

What is the threat to our nations? What, for example, is the great enemy of Latin America that compels it to waste \$165 million a day on weapons and soldiers? I assure you that such threats are far less significant than those posed by the mosquito that carries malaria, for instance. They are less significant than the threat posed by the lack of opportunities that pushes our young people into crime. They are less significant than the threat posed by the drug cartels and street gangs that survive thanks to an unrestricted market for small arms and light weapons.

And so, what we have to do is put our priorities in order. Costa Rica was the first country to abolish its army and declare peace on the world. Thanks to that visionary decision, thanks to the liberating army of Commander Jose Figueres, who renounced arms forever, today we have the opportunity to invest our resources in things that matter. And while we know that not every nation is ready to take such a radical step, we believe that a gradual and progressive reduction in military spending is not only a good strategy for allocating resources, but also a moral imperative for developing nations. For this reason, I ask you once more to make the Costa Rica Consensus a reality (*Refer to speech "A future at the scale of our dreams", 19/09/2006*). And I also ask you to

approve the Arms Trade Treaty (*Refer to speech “A future at the scale of our dreams”, 19/09/2006*). I assure you that these two initiatives will make us safer, and certainly more developed, than the costly machinery of death that currently consumes our budgets.

What is more, spending on arms deprives us not only of economic resources. Above all, it deprives us of human resources. At this moment, the greatest arsenal of geniuses in the world is working on refining the weaponry and defence systems of a few nations. That is not where these geniuses should be. Their place is in laboratories where medicines accessible to all humankind are to be created. Their place is in the classrooms where the leaders of tomorrow are to be formed. Their place is in the Governments that need help in protecting their harvests, their cities and their populations from the effects of global warming.

We have included sustainable development in the Costa Rica Consensus because we believe there is a connection between arms and the protection of the environment. Firstly, because arms and wars generate more environmental devastation and pollution than any productive activity. And secondly, because the very existence of military spending constitutes, in and of itself, a negation of resources available to combat global warming.

Every helicopter gunship, every tank, every nuclear submarine, represent, in practice, forests that are not protected, technologies that are not becoming less costly and adaptations that are not being made. Only a few weeks remain before the Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen, where every country will have to undertake commitments much greater than today's. Costa Rica will attend the conference with its head held high, because unilaterally, and at great sacrifice, we have set ourselves goals that are ever more challenging. We have launched an initiative known as Peace with Nature, through which we propose, among other things, to become a carbon-neutral country by the year 2021. This is possible, in large part, thanks to the nearly four decades we have spent protecting our land, replanting our forests and safeguarding our natural species. And also because, at the same time that we abolished our army, we created pioneering institutions devoted to the search for renewable energy sources. Today, more than 95 per cent of our electricity comes from water or wind, from the depths of the Earth or the rays of the sun. Infinite challenges still remain for Costa Rica as for any other middle-income country. The world's rich nations,

which developed in the most unsustainable way possible, cannot now place limits that choke the development expectations of every other country. Efforts must be directed, instead, at forming a global platform that allows us to efficiently transfer international aid, information and technology from one nation to another; a platform that will only make sense if the member countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) increase their official aid for development, which today stands at \$120 billion per year. When it comes to mitigating and adapting ourselves to global warming, the world must share, not compete.

These three challenges —strengthening democracies, reducing military spending and cooperating to confront climate change— perhaps constitute the most ambitious agenda humanity has ever had to take on. Neither I, nor my Government, nor Costa Rica, will ignore this historic call. For we simply cannot fail. We cannot falter. We cannot back down when we are standing at the vanguard of 6.8 billion human beings. We are still like Adam and Eve living in a heavenly Paradise, minutes before being expelled due to our own arrogance. We are dependent of our sense of responsibility, humility and courage, not to waste our opportunity on Earth and not to squander the miracle of life that has brought us heartbreak and pain, but yet has also allowed us to know happiness. Jorge Debravo, the greatest of the Costa Rican poets, said that hope is as strong as bone, more powerful than imagination and memory. May that still-present hope give us the strength to embark on the last journey of an unsustainable civilization, and the first of a civilization that will survive and outlast us all.

PEACE REMAINS JUST OUT OF REACH

SECURITY COUNCIL OF THE UNITED NATIONS
NEW YORK, UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
24 SEPTEMBER 2009

“This organ was founded on the promise that we could sleep peacefully after the most abominable of wars. That promise has yet to be fulfilled. While we are asleep, death is awake. Death keeps watch from the warehouses that store more than 23,000 nuclear warheads, like 23,000 eyes open and waiting for a moment of carelessness.”

I am grateful for the opportunity to address a few words in the most emblematic place of international order in the nuclear era. The Security Council is the product of a mixture of stupor and hope, the harvest of an atrocious fear that led to faith in a peaceful destiny for the human race. This organ was founded on the promise that we could sleep peacefully after the most abominable of wars. Said promise, reflected in Article 26 of the Charter of the United Nations, recalls that the Security Council would promote *“the establishment and maintenance of international peace and security, with the least diversion for armaments of the world’s human and economic resources”*.

That promise has yet to be fulfilled. While we are asleep, death is awake. Death keeps watch from the warehouses that store more than 23,000 nuclear warheads, like 23,000 eyes open and waiting for a moment of carelessness. Death is incited and spurred on by those who perfect weapons of mass destruction instead of destroying them, and by those who each year allocate tens of billions of dollars to vertical proliferation. Death is courted by fundamentalists and megalomaniacs, radicals and populists, who sustain their power with gunpowder. I thank President Barack Obama for the opportunity to discuss the reduction of nuclear weapons in the world. A large group of Nobel Peace Laureates has gone even further. For years, we have lobbied for the total abolition of nuclear weapons, because we believe that they run counter to the

survival instinct of every species. However, it does not seem plausible to discuss disarmament as long as existing agreements are not even being honoured; as long as there are countries that resist ratifying the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT); as long as there are those who hide data, store fissile material and reject international verification mechanisms, shielded behind their sovereign status; as long as nuclear tests continue to take place; and as long as this Security Council maintains its silence before widely known secrets, such as was the case with the clandestine network of proliferation of nuclear supplies, led with impunity from Pakistan by Abdul Qadeer Khan, in open mockery of the logic underlying Resolution 1540.

It does not seem plausible to speak of a safer world, as long as the proliferation of other types of weapons remains in its perennial second-place position of our international agenda. This Council fails in its historic mission every day when it turns a blind eye to the rampant arms race. The world spends \$3.5 billion every day on weapons and soldiers. Each year, more than \$42 billion in conventional arms are sold to developing nations, where weak or non-existent democracies are incapable of satisfying the most basic needs of their people. Even in Latin America, which has never been more peaceful or more democratic, this year nearly \$60 billion will be allocated to military spending, in a region with an average 7-year education enrolment rate and a poverty rate that affects more than 200 million inhabitants.

This is why I ask you that we approve the Arms Trade Treaty that my Government has presented to this Organ. If it is legitimate for us to worry about the possibility that terrorist networks may gain access to a nuclear weapon, it is also legitimate for us to worry about the rifles, grenades and machine guns that are given into their hands. Who said that killing thousands in one blow is worse than killing thousands every day?

Twenty years ago, I visited the United Nations during my first presidential term. In those days, we talked about a world without nuclear warheads, a world in which we would finally control the weapons that fuelled wars between brothers. Today, I come back as a modern-day Rip Van Winkle, to find that everything has changed — everything except that. Peace remains just out of reach. Nuclear and conventional weapons continue to exist, despite all promises. It is up to us to ensure

that 20 years from now we do not awaken to the same terrors we suffer today.

I am not unaware of the fact that the world's biggest arms sellers are represented here. But today, I am not addressing the makers of arms, but the leaders of humanity, who have the responsibility to put principles above utilitarian considerations, and to fulfil the promise of a future where — finally— we can sleep in peace.

PART TWO

**DEMOCRACY IS THE
ABODE OF FREEDOM**

TOWARDS A GOOD GOVERNMENT: TASKS STILL PENDING...

REGIONAL MEETING ON GOVERNANCE
SAN JOSÉ, COSTA RICA 12 OCTOBER 2006

“If Latin American democracies do not begin to pay off, if they do not constantly reform their States to make them governable, and they fail to meet the needs of their citizens, the fear of falling into chaos and anarchy will make their nations return to the old lines of dictatorship. Like the son of a tyrant, who after gathering the courage to run away from his home, returns with his head down to be beaten in exchange for food.”

It is such a great honour to speak to you. It is such a great honour to step onto the dais in an activity whose democratic roots invigorate the debate and fill the air with vitality and freedom. Today, I take part in a discussion that praises Costa Rican people, and all the visitors from sister nations who honour us with their presence on our land. What brings us together here is the noble pursuit of an ideal; the conviction, rooted in the depths of the human heart, where our tireless “Quixote” resides, that men and women are capable of organizing in freedom and governing their peaceful coexistence under the mandate of their own sovereignty. We are united by the faith in that a true good government, no matter how elusive and difficult it may be, is an insurmountable north in the march of our people. Our continuous struggle is in line with Winston Churchill’s beautiful words: *“Every day you may make progress. Every step may be fruitful. Yet there will stretch out before you an ever-lengthening, ever-ascending, ever-improving path. You know you will never get to the end of the journey. But this, so far from discouraging, only adds to the joy and glory of the climb.”*

I feel extremely fortunate to join you in this journey.

A mature and plural democracy, such as the Costa Rican, is bound to undertake this march by holding a mirror. We are obliged to carefully look at our reality and our mistakes in every single step we make. In

terms of governability and good governance, although we have travelled a long way, we still have a long way to go. I wish to refer in particular to two aspects that I consider of vital importance in our country: the reform and modernization of the State, and the strengthening of ethics in the public service.

When mentioning reform and modernization of the State, in Costa Rica there is the imprecise but historically founded idea that a euphemism is being used to designate mechanisms for reducing the state system and dismissals disguised under friendly names. Some years ago, a distorted perception of the delicate task of modernizing our government generated consequences that encouraged the distrust of our people and that have made it particularly difficult to undertake any change since then.

Distrusting of government reform projects, Costa Ricans have made the mistake of believing that the risk of experiencing a negative —or socially harmful— state reform, is enough to justify the permanence of the status quo. This has hampered the progress of the country and has generated a number of adjustments urging for the reform and modernization of the Costa Rican State.

In order to carry out this reform, it is necessary to strike up an institutionalized and civil dialog between the different actors in our society. Looking for democratic agreements becomes decisive in determining the type and size of the State we need and want to build. But one thing should be very clear to us social dialog is away to reach agreements, not unanimities. We cannot continue wandering without a lodestar, endlessly arguing among ourselves, chasing the mirage of unanimity. Life in democracy is no longer viable if the Government is not capable of making decisions within reasonable terms; if it is not capable of acting vigorously, quickly and timely to meet the demands of the people. Costa Ricans chose us to be in charge of a country, not to seek popularity of whoever consents everything but executes nothing. We were not chosen to invite people to our standstill, but to be in charge of a nation thirsty for leadership on the road to development.

Here we are putting Costa Rica on the road again; and to achieve this, we must cast aside the false dichotomies that often seize our discussions. The most important one of them is related to the relationship between the State and the market in the economy of our nations. The demonization of the State by apologists of the market, and of the

market by supporters of state intervention, is twice naive, useless, and dangerous.

It is undeniable that more than half a century of extensive state intervention in the economy reported for a vast area of our continent — although some prefer to forget it— important achievements in growth and economic modernization. But it also contributed to the generation of protected and inefficient productive sectors, hypertrophied and — very often— corrupt state systems, and the uncontrolled proliferation of pressure groups in permanent search for the favour of the bureaucracy. The weight of long-accumulated inefficiency appeared with brutal force in the economic crisis of the 1980s.

Thus, it is an act of rationality to admit that it is essential to rectify the role of the State in our countries; that it is necessary to free the private sector from the ties that for a long time condemned it to inefficiency; and that it is healthy that the private initiative take on many functions previously assumed by the State, such as the administration of our ports and airports, and the construction and reconstruction of our collapsed road system.

It is also an act of rationality to rethink the role that the State should assume in the granting of certain services. This is why the bills to modernize the Costa Rican Electricity Institute (ICE, by its initials in Spanish) and the National Insurance Institute (INS, by its initials in Spanish) are in the legislative process. These are nothing but expressions of our commitment to governance and to the adaptation of the public sector to a globalized world. We intend to free these institutions so that they can function with more agility, and exclusively focused on the demands of the citizens. These reforms will have to be followed, later, by a comprehensive review of the regulations that rule purchases, contracts and public investments, so that essential controls in the execution of public spending, guarantee the quality and integrity of the expenditure, and not become cunning devices that paralyze the institutions. These reform actions are urgent and necessary, but we must be aware of the fact that it is irrational and risky to confuse the rectification of the role of the State with an indiscriminate mutilation of its capacities, including those necessary to carry out functions such as the redistribution of wealth, the fight against poverty, the social integration and the investment in human capital and infrastructure, which the market can hardly achieve. We must therefore admit a truth that should never have been controversial:

that the roles of the State and of the market are complementary and not contradictory. In other words, it is irrational and dangerous to confuse the reform of the State with the destruction of its own roles. As stated by the writer Octavio Paz, Nobel Literature Laureate, some years ago:

“...as a mechanism the market is efficient, but like all mechanisms, it is blind: with the same indifference it creates abundance and poverty. Left to its own movement, it threatens the ecological balance of the planet, corrupts the air, poisons the water, turns forests into deserts and, in short, harms many living species, including mankind. Last but not least: it is not, and it cannot be a life model. It is not ethics but barely a method to produce and consume. It ignores fraternity, destroys social relationships, imposes uniformity in consciences and has made a trade of art and literature. There is not the slightest nostalgia for state-idolatry in what I have just said. The State is not the creator of wealth. Many of us ask ourselves: Does this situation have any remedy? If so, which is it? I would lie if I said I know the answer. Nobody does. Our century ends with a huge enigma, what can we do? Offer our testimony. Sincerely tell what we feel and think is already the beginning of an answer.”

The reform that we undertake must, therefore, be ethically defensible, and always involve privileging the citizens over administration, understanding that flesh and blood people are the *raison d'être* of all our governmental efforts. A State that places the individual at the centre of its public policies and that is at the service of the people is the first step in our governance.

This leads to the second point I want to discuss with you: the need to strengthen the ethics in public service. A democracy, in addition to being a political system, is a system of values, a set of principles that are unredeemable, undebatable and not susceptible to being pushed into the background. As Aung San Suu Kyi well said, *“A good government is not a simple result of a political system. It is indissolubly linked to the values that prevail within a society. Unless a nation can rebuild its human values, independence will not mean a fuller existence for its citizens (...) Independent government only makes sense if it is capable of giving people greater confidence in their own value”*.

With these words, I am not revealing anything new: since the beginning of our intellectual history, a Socratic precept associates political action with the meaning of living well. “*Living well*“, according to Socrates, “*is nothing other than living as claimed by probity and justice*”. Therein lies the crux of the relation between morals and politics, very close to that institution of political morals that I have learned from the Costa Rican people. The goal of all political action is the exercise of probity and the practice of justice.

That is, therefore, the stature of our mandate: to magnify, with our performance from the public service, every man and every woman of our nations. Probity in the government is not only a political imperative, but a human one. It has to do with our supportive capacity of using the position we hold to ennoble the condition of our fellow citizens and make them feel proud of being Costa Ricans, Chileans, Uruguayans, Salvadorans, Nicaraguans... If we succeed in doing this, if we can be representatives of our citizens not only through the mechanism by which they elected us, but also through the synchronism of the values we proclaim, we will be able to decode one of the most difficult riddles of a good government satisfying the expectations of individuals. Because human beings need, above all, to be satiated in their elemental values; they need to feel that what they believe in with the greatest fervour finds home in the hearts of those who represent them.

Human beings need to feel that their hunger is not indifferent to their ruler; that their anguish worries their ruler; that their unemployment, ignorance and misery are problems that also keep their ruler awake at night. Human beings need to hear the echo of their values and concerns in the speech and in the practice of their government. With the hand on our chest, we must evaluate every day whether this is the case, whether we are indeed an echo for the anguish of our inhabitants, or a deaf wall of indifference.

Democracy is a means whose ultimate aim are the individuals. If as a system we fail in satisfying the individuals’ needs, institutions weaken, credibility breaks up and democracy subverts.

I want to draw attention to this point: democracy must pay off, otherwise it runs the risk of weakening to the point of disappearing. The fundamental challenge of current Latin American democracies is, precisely, to improve their citizens’ quality of life, to yield results and

to produce an effective impact on the lives of individuals. What good is it for Latin America to have recovered democracy if it is unable to put food in the mouths of its inhabitants or a roof over the heads of its children? What good is it for poor farmers to put their signature on a presidential ballot if they do not know to write nothing but their name?

If Latin American democracies do not begin to pay off, if they do not constantly reform their States to make them governable, and they fail to meet the needs of their citizens, the fear of falling into chaos and anarchy will make their nations return to the old lines of dictatorship. Like the son of a tyrant, who after gathering the courage to run away from his home, returns with his head down to be beaten in exchange for food.

The whole Latin America, with the sole exception of Cuba, our sister nation, has crossed the threshold of democracy. With our effort and determination to make our governments and states governable, we will set an example to the Cuban people who need strength to liberate. It is up to us to prove that it is possible, that the ideal that we are pursuing, in that endless path I spoke about at the beginning, is the noblest pursuit of human beings: the peaceful coexistence of individuals who are organized under the simple command of their own sovereignty.

On behalf of the people of Costa Rica, united by an enduring spirit of fraternity, it fills me with joy to welcome to our country a member of the family of one of the greatest heroes in human history.

I would like to thank Martin Luther King III for his leadership and achievements during his relentless struggle to make equity a reality, and for his unconditional support to the cause of peace. For no descendant of the King family, and for no common man, peace is an easy path.

With his presence today, and every day, Martin Luther King III urges us to fight some of the same demons that hurt his father's world. Too many people die in poverty, while a trillion dollars a year are wasted on weapons and troops. Too many nations surrender to xenophobia; too many nations allow the reproduction of war, violence and destruction; too many nations weaken human rights and citizen guarantees against the rising wave of fear.

Now, more than ever, we need to listen to Martin Luther King Junior's words. The words that he pronounced in 1963 and that still remain true today:

“The ultimate weakness of violence is that it is a descending spiral, begetting the very thing it seeks to destroy. Instead of diminishing evil, it multiplies it. Through violence you may murder the liar, but you cannot murder the lie, nor establish the truth. Through violence you murder the hater, but you do not murder hate. In fact, violence merely increases hate... Returning violence for violence multiplies violence, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.”

It is our duty to ensure that Martin Luther King’s struggle for justice and freedom continues to be the light that enlightens our path, our endless path.

DEMOCRACY IS NOT ENOUGH

CIRCUIT OF MONTEVIDEO
MEDELLIN, COLOMBIA
16 DECEMBER 2007

“Never has democracy ever reigned in Latin America like it does today, and although we have accomplished many achievements and we are solving many issues, it is clear that democracy is not enough to ensure the quality of life of our citizens.”

Thank you very much for allowing me to join you on this important occasion, in which the Montevideo Circuit meets, once again, to reflect on the best paths the Latin American region should follow, and to devise the most appropriate ways to pursue our dreams and satisfy our needs.

In many respects, the name “Montevideo” applies well to this group of politicians and academics: this is a hill (a “*monte*” in Spanish) from which you can see; a promontory that allows us to appreciate the reality of our nations with both perspective and vision. However, those of us who make up this Circuit are not called upon to remain on the hill, as if we were gods on the Olympus. Each one of us has the responsibility of being a messenger between the hill and the plain, between the academy and the reality.

I have come here today with that intention: to speak with the verb of practice in a circle of reflection. In line with the plan of this activity, my lecture this afternoon will be entitled “*Democracy is not enough*”. This seems to me to be a revealing title, not only for its content, but also because it reflects a common tendency in circles of discussion and thinking: the tendency to reach such levels of abstraction that what is evident for any common citizen in the daily performance of their activities is to be debated. If I ran into a mother one day on any street and asked her “*excuse me, madam, is democracy enough for you?*”, she would immediately reply with another question “*enough for what?*”. And if, with my academic naivety, I answered “*enough to live*”; she would probably exclaim: “*Of course it is not enough: democracy does*

not feed my family, nor does it assure me a job, nor does it protect me against the thieves at the corner of my house, nor does it guarantee my children going to university, nor does it assure me medical assistance if I get sick, nor does it definitely give me any certainty that I will have enough money at the end of the month!''. And that mother would be absolutely right.

It is not due to the absence of democracy that more and more young Latin Americans are joining gangs dedicated to crime and drug use. It is not due to the absence of democracy that there are hundreds of millions of individuals living in the worst poverty conditions in Latin America. It is not due to the absence of democracy that in our region one in three teenagers does not receive high school education. Never has democracy reigned in Latin America like it does today, and although we have accomplished many achievements and we are solving many issues, it is clear that democracy is not enough to ensure the quality of life of our citizens.

The great risk we run is not limited to the challenges we face in terms of health, housing, education or security—which are already considerable challenges—, but rather to the possibility that the inhabitants of our nations discard democracy as an expendable luxury, in exchange for the meeting of their essential needs. That mother whom I questioned on the street may be totally convinced that democracy is not enough, but that may lead her to think that democracy is not necessary. And millions of individuals can reach that same conclusion.

This is the heart of the matter. The fundamental challenge of current Latin American democracies is, precisely, to improve their citizens' quality of life, to yield results and to produce an effective impact on the lives of individuals.

Today I have come to speak about two courses of action that I consider essential to achieve the survival of democracy in our region, and to ensure the survival of its inhabitants, which should be our most desired dream: the reduction of poverty and inequality, and the increase in social spending.

I have said many times that democracy cannot be restricted to politics, no matter how important this is. Democracy also has to do with economy. If its essence is the distribution of power, is there a greater power than the economic power?

Latin America is the most unequal region in the world. That may sound overwhelming to us, it may sound shameful to us, it may seem

calamitous; but it may not feel false to us. Anyone who has seen luxury shopping malls built next to slums, shacks or suburbs, in any country of Latin America, knows what I am referring to. Anyone who has seen the polarised window of a brand spanking new car before the presence of a child selling pencils at the traffic light, in any Latin American country, knows what I am referring to. Anyone who has seen the impeccable and deserted building of a private clinic a few meters away from a public hospital, collapsed by the thousands of people who need to be assisted, in any Latin American country, knows what I am referring to. It is not necessary to come to the Circuit of Montevideo to observe the inequality of our region. Although it may be necessary to come to think about the possible solutions.

I say “solutions”, in plural, because there is no magic potion against an issue that is complex and multi-causal. Each country and each government must design the policies that best suit their conditions. However, solidarity should be a cross-cutting issue for any of those policies. Redistribution of wealth does not entail taking everything away from the rich to give everything to the poor, as if we were the Robin Hoods of the modern era. Many historical failures have shown us that the impersonation of the poor in the position of the rich, or of the State in the position of the rich, in the best-case scenario ended up generating a situation of inequality identical to the one that was intended to be fought; and in the worst-case scenario, it ended up leading countries into economic and productive crises in which both the poor and the rich ended up lacking the essentials. If the history of other nations much more equal than ours has taught us anything, it is that a progressive and supportive tax and investment system in a network of public services of universal access is much more inclusive than a radical reform.

The Nordic countries should be our example to follow in this respect. Small countries, where opportunities are there for everyone. Small countries, where everyone is invited to the table for bread and joy. Countries that seem to have come out of a Hans Christian Andersen’s book of fairy tales, and not because every frog has the possibility of becoming a prince in them, but because every human being has the possibility of becoming what they have dreamed of being, without doors being shut before their eyes. For those who have visited these countries, coming to Latin America is jumping from the fairy tale to reality. Today, I have come to tell you that perhaps we are the ones who live believing in fairy tales, and not them. We are the ones who

continue believing that someday a leader will come—or a constitutional reform—, which will make us “*live happily ever after*”. We are the ones who continue believing that without paying taxes we will be able to, as if by magic, build schools, roads, hospitals and universities. We are the ones who continue believing that it is possible to live in a democracy without citizens assuming responsibilities; and we speak to the people of participatory democracy when we have not yet finished achieving their adherence to representative democracy.

The Nordics might live like in a fairy tale, but we are the ones who believe the tale that their life has not cost them plenty of work, effort and a great spirit of solidarity. If we do not considerably increase the tax burden in our countries; if we do not ensure that this tax burden is increasingly progressive; if our inhabitants do not understand that living peacefully and in democracy demands a huge share of responsibility from them; if we do not get our governments to learn to create equitable opportunities, and to design and maintain a true social welfare network; then we will never be the region of Andersen’s stories, but the eternal region *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by Garcia Marquez.

The second aspect I wanted to mention is closely linked to the first one: Latin American governments have to considerably increase their social spending, especially their spending on education. This is achieved by obtaining greater resources, which can only come from higher taxes; but it is also achieved by organising priorities. Resources will always be limited, and each government must carefully analyse what these are to be invested in.

I have always thought that governing is like choosing. Maybe in this case, as in many others, we have to step down from the hill to the plain. The whole world operates based on priorities, as reminded by Shakespeare in *Troilus and Cressida*, when he wrote: “*The heavens themselves, the planets and this centre observe grade, priority and place*”. Any parent can teach us the value of priorities. I frankly doubt that a head of a household will spend money on putting bars in the house if their children have nothing to eat. I frankly doubt that a head of a household will spend money on changing the car if that implies their children not being able to go to school. With very few exceptions in Latin America, Colombia being the most noticeable of them, current circumstances force us to understand that military spending is a luxury that we cannot afford. The real threat to our nations does not come from

abroad, but from within: from the deterioration of our social fabric, from the frustration of our citizens, from the increase in organized crime, from the collapse of our public services. That is what we have to give priority to.

Actually, if we focus our efforts on achieving a more equitable distribution of wealth and we increase our social spending, this will be a region where Bolivar's cry —the cry of freedom— will finally destroy the tyrant who has always oppressed us, that it is no particular country or person, but the impossibility of seeing our dreams come true.

I conclude with a subject that I particularly carry close to my heart. I am back again on Colombian land, on this land washed by the blood of innocent people and the tears of their families; on this land where human beings do not die only at hospitals, but also at squares and mountains; on this land that for so many years has suffered a pain that it does not deserve. The Colombian land is a dagger stuck between the vertebrae of the Andes, and its wound hurts on the side of all Latin America.

I have not come here to give peace lessons. But I have come to give words of hope. The Central American land was also washed in the past with blood and tears, and today it is a fertile land for dreams. I want to tell the Colombian people that peace is possible, even when it is incredibly difficult to achieve. Peace is possible, even if it requires a thousand attempts. Peace is possible, even if years go by and it is barely a lighthouse in the distance amid a harsh storm.

Now, the dream of peace requires willingness to compromise. If there was something that were forced to learn in Central America during the peace processes, it was that nobody was going to get everything they wanted. That, precisely, was what Israel and Palestine did not understand, when back in the year 2000, at Camp David, they had reached an agreement on 95% of the matters that confronted them, but they were unable to agree on the remaining 5%. Would it have not been better if they had compromised? There is a proverb in my country that says, "*A bad settlement is always better than a good trial*". I still think that a peace agreement where everyone is a bit unsatisfied for not achieving entirely what they proposed is much better than an eternal war that none of the conflicting parties will be able to win.

I am not naive. I know that war in Colombia is very complex. I know that the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC, by its initials in Spanish) have been extremely uncompromising throughout

history. I know that for a long time they have not fought for an ideology, or is it that the FARC have not realized that the Cold War is over? Is it that the Colombian forests and Sierra Maestra are the only regions in the world where the news of the fall of the Berlin Wall never reached? This is a democracy. If the FARC wanted to assert their ideology, they would have already created a political party that explicitly defended their ideas. It is a truism that these groups do not fight for freedom, nor for democracy, nor for justice, nor for any ideal that may be pursued by political means; these groups fight to defend the possibility of continuing to poison people with drugs, and to become rich at the expense of it.

I have come to Colombia to express my solidarity with the need for the humanitarian agreement promoted by President Uribe, together with President Sarkozy of France, and to tell you that this may be the beginning for the culmination of the long nightmare of terrorism in Colombia.

Here are some words of a great Costa Rican poet, Jorge Debravo, the poet of peace and freedom:

“—Can you hear? There is a deep wheeze of work in the breast of the world (...)

—It is that man is being born again. It is that man is being created.

—It is that death begins to know it is a stranger in its own inheritance.

—It is that the light has returned from exile.

—It is that man has known that he is his father and his mother and his son.

And he has stood up without the permission of the sun”.

This is the sound of peace I would like to hear in the streets and avenues of Colombia. It may be a whisper at first, but I hope it will turn into a deafening scream. I hope that peace will disembark on this land; peace will liberate this people; peace will reign in the mountains, in the squares and in the schools. I hope peace will come, my fellow Colombians. I hope peace will put down roots on this land.

WE HAVE TO PAVE THE WAY FOR PEACE AND DEMOCRACY

PRESENTATION OF SAN JOSE AGREEMENT
SAN JOSE, COSTA RICA
22 JULY 2009

“Peace can only be achieved through reconciliation. Neither side of the conflict will prevail. Victory will be half for both, or it will be for neither. I know this is difficult to accept for two groups that have stated arguments that explain their behaviour. But we cannot make the mistake of turning the pains of the past into shackles for the future. I insist that we must look away from the reasons that led to the confrontation and turn our attention to the challenges that can lead to reconciliation.”

As said by the Norwegian playwright, Henrik Ibsen, “*You should never wear your best trousers when you go out to fight for freedom and truth*”. The same applies to peace. When you come out to fight for peace, you must dress your soul with protective clothes. We have to be willing to give our best, and then to give a little bit more. We have to be willing to fall and to get up, to heal our wounds and to start over. Peace is not the work of a day, nor of a week, but of a life dedicated to the fragile construction of a work which is always unfinished. This is something I have known for a long time. This is why I do not give up. I have learned not to keep my eyes on the stones of the path, but on the end of the path.

Two rounds of discussions have concluded in the search for a peaceful solution to the Honduran conflict. They contribute themselves to a democratic achievement. Because every hour we have invested in exchanging words is an hour we have refrained from exchanging insults. Because every moment that we have dedicated to respect and reason are minutes taken away from violence and madness. However, the Honduran delegations know that the clock is ticking dramatically quickly, and it is ticking against the people of Honduras. No matter how intense the personal stories of this conflict might be, there is no

greater victim than innocent people. Hondurans are the great sacrifices of procrastination, and we cannot keep on waiting to provide them with perfect options. Because by seeking perfection we can lose what we are trying to preserve: the peace of a nation that deserves to go back to constitutional order.

Such peace can only be achieved through reconciliation. Neither side of the conflict will prevail. Victory will be half for both, or it will be for neither. I know this is difficult to accept for two groups that have stated arguments that explain their behaviour. But we cannot make the mistake of turning the pains of the past into shackles for the future. I insist that we must look away from the reasons that led to the confrontation and turn our attention to the challenges that can lead to reconciliation. I have exposed these challenges in seven points that you already know very well; seven points that we have discussed and enriched with the suggestions and opinions given by the Honduran delegates, and also by many other people who give us their advice. According to them, today we present to you the San Jose Agreement, a specific proposal that we have submitted for the consideration of both sectors.

They are the ones who now have to decide whether to sign or not. I present such agreement in my capacity as mediator, but above all, as someone who wants peace for the Honduran people, the restoration of the constitutional order, and the democratic normality in a sister nation. I do think that there are still other ways to find a solution to the conflict. But I also think this remains being the best way. Both delegations can still refer to the Organization of American States or to some other forum for dialogue. But I repeat that the time that gets out of our hands falls on the backs of a nation crying out for tranquillity. The Honduran delegations are responsible for making the journey possible, even amidst of the thickets of rancour and resentment, even amidst the thorns of very recent memories. We must open way to peace and democracy, with all our strength and with all our understanding. We must open way to peace and democracy, because the alternative is a cliff where there is even more anguish than we think there is.

This is why today I respectfully, but urgently, ask you to carefully review this document and reflect on it. I can advance that it is not perfect. Almost nothing is in democracy. But I do assure you that this is the first agreement in the history of humanity granted to reverse a coup d'état thanks to the will of the sectors involved. If this is signed,

Honduras will be a legendary example of a society which knew how to put reconciliation and unity above any other value.

I want to thank you again for the trust you placed in me by making me your mediator. I carried out my role to the best of my abilities and the way I understood it. I hope to have fulfilled my part. I hope that the Honduran delegations will also know how to fulfil theirs.

EVERYONE IS TO FACE UP TO THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES

UNITY SUMMIT OF LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN
CANCUN, MEXICO
22 FEBRUARY 2010

“This region, tired of hollow promises and empty words, needs a legion of ever more tolerant statespersons, not a legion of ever more authoritarian rulers.”

This is the last time I take part in an international summit. It does not intend to say goodbye to Latin America or the Caribbean. I carry the dreams of this region in my soul. But I must say goodbye to you, colleagues, fellows, traveling companions. I must say goodbye to this auditorium which, in a group of voices, gathers the hopes of 600 million people, almost a tenth of human population. It is on behalf of that Latin American lineage that I want to share a few reflections with you today. On behalf of that ancestry that dwells beyond these doors and requires from us the audacity to build a more dignified place under the sun.

Beyond speech making and applause, the truth is that our region has made little progress over the last decades. In certain areas, there has been some resolute backsliding. Many want to board a rusty train to the past, to the ideological trenches that divided the world during the Cold War. Latin America is at risk of increasing its absurd collection of lost generations. At risk of wasting, once again, its opportunity on Earth. It is up to us, and those coming after us, to prevent this from happening. We must honour our debt to democracy, to development, and to the peace of our nations, a debt that is overdue for centuries.

Honouring our debt to democracy means much more than passing political constitutions, signing democratic letters, or holding periodic elections. It means building dependable institutionalism beyond the exhausted structures that currently sustain our state apparatuses. It means ensuring the supremacy of the law and the effective exercise of the rule of law, which some insist on bypassing. It means strengthening

the essential checks and balances, as these are deeply threatened by tentacular governments that have erased the borders between the ruler, the party, and the State. It means ensuring the enjoyment of a hard core of fundamental rights and guarantees, as these are chronically violated in a large part of the Latin American region. And it means, above all, using political power to attain greater development, improve the living conditions of our people, and expand the freedoms of our citizens.

We must not confuse the democratic origin of a regime with the democratic functioning of the State. In our region, there are governments that use election results to justify their wish to restrict individual freedoms and chase their adversaries. They use a democratic mechanism to subvert the basis of democracy. If there is no opposition, true democrats create it. True democrats prove their success with the fruit of their labour, not with the product of their retaliation. They prove their power by opening hospitals, roads and universities, not by restricting freedom of speech and opinion. True democrats show their energy by combating poverty, ignorance and insecurity in the citizenship, not foreign empires, secret conspiracies, and imaginary invasions. This region, tired of hollow promises and empty words, needs a legion of ever more tolerant statespersons, not a legion of ever more authoritarian rulers. Defending the rights of those who think alike us is easy. Defending the rights of those who think differently is the challenge of a true democrat. Hopefully, our peoples will be wise enough to choose rulers who can live up to democratic principles.

Hopefully, they will also resist the temptation of those who promise a paradise behind participatory democracy, which can be a dangerous weapon in the hands of populism and demagoguery. The problems of Latin America cannot be solved by replacing a dysfunctional representative democracy with a chaotic participatory one. Paraphrasing Octavio Paz, I dare say that in our region “democracy does not need wings, what it needs is to put down roots”. Before selling any tickets to paradise, we should worry about consolidating our fragile institutions, safeguarding the essential guarantees, ensuring equal opportunities for our citizens, increasing the transparency of our governments and, above all, improving the efficiency of our bureaucracies. My experience as a ruler has shown me that ours are sclerotic and hypertrophied States, incapable of meeting the needs of our people and yielding the fruits that democracy is bound to deliver.

This has serious consequences on our ability to honour the second debt that I would like to mention, the debt to development. A debt which, I repeat, we ourselves must honour. Neither the Spanish colonialism, nor the lack of natural resources, nor the hegemony of the United States, nor any other theory resulting from the eternal victimization of Latin America, account for the fact that we refuse to increase our investment in innovation, charge taxes to the rich, graduate professionals in the fields of engineering and exact sciences, promote competition, build infrastructure, or provide legal certainty for companies. It is time for everyone to face up to the responsibilities of their own progress. By what right does Latin America complain about the inequalities that divide their peoples when half of its tributes are collected as indirect taxes, and the fiscal burden of some nations in the region barely reaches 10% of their Gross Internal Product? By what right does Latin America complain about its underdeveloped status, when it shows a proverbial resistance to change in the face of innovation and adaptation to new circumstances? By what right does Latin America complain about the lack of quality jobs, when it allows its average education enrolment rate to be of about 8 years? And, most of all, by what right does Latin America complain about poverty when it spends almost \$60 billion per year on weapons and soldiers?

The debt to peace is the most shameful of debts, because it reveals the amnesia of a region that fuels the return to the arms race, aimed in many cases at fighting ghosts and illusions. This also shows a total inability to set priorities in Latin America, a practice that prevents the consolidation of a true agenda for development. There are countries suffering internal conflicts that may justify an increase in their expenditure on national defence. But in the majority of our nations, higher military spending is inexcusable against the needs of peoples whose true enemies are famine, disease, illiteracy, inequality, crime and environmental degradation. It is unfortunate that this *Unity Summit* is attended by countries that arm themselves against each other. It is also unfortunate that this *Unity Summit* lacks the presence of the Government of Honduras, whose people is victim of militarism and does not deserve punishment, but help.

Should I have been told twenty years ago that in 2010 I would still be condemning the increase of military spending in Latin America, I would have felt surprised. After seeing the shattered bodies of youths

and children wounded by war, how could this region possibly crave a return to arms? How could it possibly allow for the Dantesque procession of rockets, missiles and rifles in front of battered desks, empty lunch boxes and clinics without medicines? Some will say that I was wrong to envision a future of peace. I do not think so. Hope is never a mistake, no matter how many times it is dashed.

I still await a new dawn for Latin America and the Caribbean. I expect a future of greatness for our nations. A day will come when democracy, development and peace will fill the saddlebags of the region. A day will come when the count of lost generations will cease. That day could be tomorrow, if we dare to make it. That day could be next year, next decade, or next century.

For my part, I will keep on struggling. In spite of the shadows, I will continue to await the light at the end of the rainbow. I will keep on struggling until that day comes.

POLITICAL PRISONERS ARE NOT TO EXIST IN DEMOCRACIES

ARTICLE
13 MARCH 2010

“These prisoners are not like other prisoners, nor does Cuba meet the principles of the rule of law. These are political or conscience prisoners.”

I would like to add my voice to a wave of indignation that runs through a large part of our America and the world. Last 23 February, while we Latin American leaders were assembled in Cancun, speaking about democracy and freedom, Orlando Zapata Tamayo died in Havana. He was an opponent to Castro regime, and he had been a political prisoner for 7 years.

An 86-day hunger strike was not enough to convince the Cuban government that the life of this person should have been preserved beyond any ideological differences. 86 days were not enough to stir up the compassion of a regime that praises itself for being solidary, but in practice applies this solidarity only to its supporters.

There is nothing we can do now to save this dissident, but we can still raise our voices in the name of Guillermo Fariñas Hernandez, who has been on a hunger strike for 14 days in Santa Clara to ask for the release of other Cuban political prisoners, particularly those with health issues.

Without a doubt, hunger strikes are a delicate weapon as a means of protest. It would be risky for any rule of law to have the obligation to release prisoners when they decide to stop eating. But these prisoners are not like other prisoners, nor does Cuba meet the principles of the rule of law. They are political or conscience prisoners, who have not committed any crimes other than opposing to a regime, who were judged by a court system of questionable independence, and who must endure excessive penalties without having caused any damage to other people.

Political prisoners are not to exist in democracies. In no truly free country, someone goes to jail for thinking differently. Cuba can make any oratory efforts it wishes to sell the idea that it is a “special democracy”, but each political prisoner is the practical denial of such claim. Each political prisoner is an irrefutable proof of authoritarianism. Besides, there is the fact that these are people with a much-weakened health condition. The reasons why they went to prison become irrelevant here. All governments who respect human rights must at least show compassion toward weakened individuals, instead of calling them “blackmailers”.

I have always fought for a Cuban transition to democracy. I have always fought for this single party regime to become a pluralist regime, and thus cease to be an exception in the American continent. I am convinced that if a democracy lacks an opposition, it must create one, not chase it, not repress it and condemn it to a prison hell, as the regime of Raul Castro does.

The Cuban government now has the opportunity to show to the world the first signs of that democratic transition that we have so long awaited. The Cuban government has an opportunity to show that it can learn to respect human rights, particularly the rights of opponents, because there is no merit in just respecting the rights of supporters. If the Cuban government released its political prisoners, it would become more entitled to demand respect to its political system and to its way of doing things.

I am aware that, by making these affirmations, I am exposing myself to all kind of accusations from the Cuban regime. They will accuse me of interfering in their internal affairs, of disrespecting their sovereignty and, most certainly, of being a servant to the empire. Without a doubt, I am a servant to the empire: the empire of reason, compassion and freedom. I will not shut up when human rights are being violated. I will not shut up when the sole existence of a regime like Cuba's is an affront to democracy. I will not shut up when the lives of human beings are being jeopardized to defend at any cost an ideological cause that expired many years ago. I have lived enough to know that there is nothing worse than being afraid to speak the truth.

PART THREE

DEVELOPMENT AS A UNIVERSAL RIGHT

LET US STOP NAMING FREEDOM AND LET US START BUILDING IT

ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES
WASHINGTON, UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
4 DECEMBER 2006

“The Latin American autarchy process involved not only commercial protectionism, but also intellectual protectionism: only in that context, we can account for the fact that in our nations there are still attempted democracies without opposition, elections without parties, freedom of speech with official censorship, and so many and varied occurrences of caudillos, both past and present, which proved to be wrong in the rest of the world, but in Latin America not only persist, but seem ever more invigorated”.

I approach this stage with gratefulness and humility. The Organization of American States is a tribune from which the nations of this continent proclaim the dearest dreams of our peoples. Deep hopes and great utopias have cherished in this room; here, more than in any other organization of the world, one can sense a spirit of freedom, the American spirit par excellence.

Only the nations comprised by this organization understand the heavy burden shouldered by our America: being the great promise for Man, the epicentre of the unrealized ideals and dreams of the rest of the planet. All the expectations relative to the mythical expeditions to the New World continue to chase the inhabitants of America. The sole notion that a new world was possible turned us into a human experiment, where thousands of theories could be tested. We were the *tabula rasa* of history, a demonstrable hypothesis. For this reason, it is not surprising that this land hosted and continues to host the most unusual and creative ways of conceiving life as a society.

Maybe this phenomenon had an even deeper impact on the reality of Latin America, which sometimes appears to be destined to be the

madwoman of the house. As Garcia Marquez once said in his famous speech, the knot of our solitude lies on the fact that the rest of the world intends to measure us with models that were not our own. And that is true. But I am convinced that the solitude of Latin America also stems from its intention to completely isolate itself from the course of history, by pretending to have such original systems that they forget the most elementary lessons of human becoming. The Latin American autarchy process involved not only commercial protectionism, but also intellectual protectionism: only in that context one can account for the fact that in our nations there are still attempted democracies without opposition, elections without parties, freedom of speech with official censorship, and so many and varied occurrences of caudillos, both past and present, which proved to be wrong in the rest of the world, but in Latin America not only persist, but seem ever more invigorated.

The creation of the dream-like America, of which Latin America was a fatal victim, suffered from the very beginning of an epistemological flaw: this region, like no other in the world, fell into the mistake of believing that names engendered objects, and that the declarations of peace, freedom, democracy and justice were nothing short of spells that could make appear, by an inexplicable miracle, the realities that we yearned. We were products of the original error, the discovery of the West Indies; but our identity since then has been configured with the effect of countless other resulting errors, the most important being the conviction that America would become the land of freedom, just because it was called that way. For five centuries we have lived under that big paradox: being free as a concept, much before than being free in reality.

This organization does not escape the phenomenon of verbal magic. In 1948, the Organization of American States signed its Charter of Incorporation, where member countries affirmed, with exemplary fervour, that they were:

“Convinced that the historical mission of America (was) to offer to man a land of liberty (...)

And that indispensable democracy (was) an indispensable condition for the stability, peace and development of our region.”

In that moment, like in so many other episodes of the American history, we were the name before the reality. While this Charter was

in force, bloody repressions and unimaginable human right violations ensued with impunity. While this Charter was in force, practically all nations of Latin America bore the yoke of dictatorship. Amid flowery descriptions of democracy and freedom, amid profuse proclamations of respect to men and citizens, thousands of people were murdered, tortured and expatriated in this part of the world.

With this I do not intend to diminish the importance of the Organization of American States. On the contrary, I want to reaffirm my deep conviction that it is in this very hall where our big differences and contrasts as a region may reach harmony.

I just wish to reflect on the fact that the existence of this organization and its statements, however necessary, are not sufficient to secure our weak democracies. It is time to invert this practice and begin by conquering reality before naming it; to work on the fundamental requirements of democracies before proclaiming ourselves to the world as the land of freedom.

It is time to take a look at our region and determine whether the famous definition given by Lincoln in Gettysburg, of a *government of the people, by the people and for the people*, is true for our nations. The most important question we need to answer, if we really want to secure the validity of democracy in the continent, is: *what powers do people have in our countries?*

First of all, we must note that the power of a starved people is not a real one. There is a basic notion that we often forget: although it is true that prosperity and economic growth are not sufficient conditions to sustain democratic regimes, it is also true that, in their absence, keeping our freedoms becomes a titanic task. Authoritarian temptations arise more easily in those places where famine, ignorance and frustration pave the way for messianism. The false redeemers of American peoples can only arise where the people are convinced of their need to be redeemed, and in a continent where hundreds of millions of people live on less than \$2 a day, I assure you that a Messiah sounds much more plausible than a democracy.

For many inhabitants of Latin America, the transition from dictatorship to democracy has been nothing but a play of words. America is still ravaged by the same calamities that arose during the dictatorships, and many of their inhabitants are still convinced that trading freedom for economic profit, that Faustian pact that has been signed so many times in our nations, is a requirement to attain a long-

awaited progress. This is not a lucubration or a rhetorical excess. In 2004, the Report on Democracy in Latin America by the United Nations Development Programme informed that 44.9% of Latin Americans were willing to support an authoritarian government as long as it solved the economic problems of their country.

Under these circumstances, it is clear that the great Latin American transformation toward freedom, reached by all our nations with the remarkable exception of Cuba, has ceased to be an irrevocable transition. Our future is at serious risk of becoming a journey back to the past. Latin America can strengthen its democratic systems and rise, in a single voice and a single hope, so that the Cuban people may also enjoy the freedom that has been refused to them, or it may once again succumb to the old authoritarian demons, enchanted by the siren songs of autocratic leadership and populism that left our nations nothing but a harvest of famine and misery.

Because in poverty-stricken populations, people lose power as they are willing to give it to anyone who offers better living conditions. Latin America cannot say that it rules for the people, nor by the people, as long as a considerable part of its population have no bread to eat, a roof to shelter, or basic access to health, education and security.

It would be foolish to say that I know, or that some of us know, the equation that would allow us to decipher the immense human drama of poverty. But it would be even more foolish to reject partial and gradual solutions based on evidence, imperfect and tentative, yet still real. Here I will mention three of such solutions: free trade, investment in education, and the reduction of military spending.

I know there is a wide range of opinions in this room about the best ways to reach a global exchange that is intensive and, at the same time, fair. Personally, I believe that free trade is the most suitable way to attain this goal. I am convinced that free trade is a path which, if travelled right, will lead to the increased wellbeing of our citizens.

My country, Costa Rica, has 4.5 million inhabitants and is one of the smallest countries in the world. For a country like mine and, in fact, for all developing countries, there is no other option but deepening their integration to global economy. Only if we open up, we will be able to develop dynamic productive sectors, capable of competing at an international level. But, above all, only if we open up, we will be able to create sufficient quality jobs for our youth. Because it has been widely shown in Latin America that the jobs linked to foreign investment and

export activities are, most of the times, formal and better paid than average.

Commercial liberalization may be defended on its merits and due to its beneficial effects on the poor. However, I want to stress the fact that the defence of free trade must be honest and consistent. It must seek a commercial exchange that is equally free for all countries; this means not making free trade yet another example of our naive custom of naming things detached from reality.

By correcting anti-competitive practices, developed countries bet on so much more than moral integrity before the world. The true practice of free trade may be the only way those countries have in order to solve one of their most pressing problems: immigration. In fact, immigration is not a security issue, it rather has to do with development, and its resolution involves delicate aspects of the relationship between the rich and poor countries. At this point, we should be well warned that there are no walls or seas capable of stopping the hungry, that history turns like a ferris wheel, and that whoever is up today, at some other time was down in water searching for a promised land.

The relationship between free trade and immigration may be clearer if we consider that the overall official aid for development granted by the more developed countries is a fourth of the sum spent in subsidies to protect farmers and a tenth of their investment in armed forces. In other words, industrialized countries are putting up walls to stop people, instead of tearing them down to allow for the circulation of goods; as a result, more and more poor people will swim to their coasts and cross their borders, since they cannot find a way for products, instead of people, to cross them.

When we say that globalization and trade opening offer extraordinary opportunities for the poorer countries, we must understand that having opportunities is not the same as having certainties. For globalization to become a beneficial force for developing countries, it is essential that these countries carry out some urgent tasks. The most important of such tasks is investing in human development and, most of all, in education.

In Latin America, one in every three youths never attends high school. That is not only an offense to our values, but also a raw testimony of the lack of economic vision. Today, more than ever, we must understand that any failures in today's education are the failures of tomorrow's economy.

Solving the deficits of education systems in developing countries almost always requires more resources. But it especially requires political willingness and clarity in the priorities of public investment. I am very certain, in particular, that the struggle for better jobs through better education is considerably linked to the struggle for demilitarization and disarmament. It is certainly not a badge of honour for our species that the global military spending has exceeded a trillion dollars in 2005, the same actual amount spent at the end of the Cold War and representing eight times the annual investment that would be required to achieve, in one decade, all the Millennium Development Goals in all the countries of the world. The current military investment made by the most industrialized countries in the world, who are responsible for 83% of the global military spending, is ten times greater than the resources allocated to official aid for development. What is this, other than an eloquent sign of lost priorities and the deepest irrationality?

On 11 September 2001, the day when the tragic events in the United States shook the world, this organization adopted the Inter-American Democratic Charter. By doing so, member States agreed that the best way to defend a nation, the best guarantee of security for their people, stem from the consolidation of democracies worldwide. However, from that day to present, global military spending was increased by more than \$200 billion.

It is tragic that the governments of some of the most underdeveloped countries continue to equip troops, purchase tanks, ammunition and combat planes, supposedly to protect a population that is being consumed in hunger and ignorance.

In 2005, Latin American countries spent almost \$24 billion in arms and troops, and this amount has increased by 25% in actual terms over the last decade, with a significant growth during last year. Latin America has started a new arms race, although it has never been as democratic as it is today, and although there have been virtually no military conflicts between countries over the past century.

For this reason, my country has presented the Costa Rica Consensus (*Refer to speech "A future at the scale of our dreams, 19/09/2006*) and the Arms Trade Treaty (*Refer to speech "A future at the scale of our dreams", 19/09/2006*). Recently, we were pleased to hear that the General Assembly of the United Nations agreed, by a unanimous majority, to set up a work group that, within one year, will make any

pertinent recommendations to begin to prepare the treaty. This is just a small victory. The road ahead of this initiative is a long one, and the support of the member countries of this forum will be essential to turn it into a reality.

As stated by article 2 of the Charter of the Organization of American States, one of the main purposes of this organization is, precisely, to achieve an effective limitation of conventional weapons that will make it possible to devote the largest amount of resources to the economic and social development of the Member States. This means that the Treaty I propose and the policy I am suggesting are not just an invitation, but a confirmation of the essential principles to which America adhered at the time of founding this organization.

If America is truly called to be the land of freedom, then it is time that we stop naming freedom and we begin building it, patiently but decidedly. For this purpose, we must face poverty. Wherever poverty flourishes, it sows the seed of violence, populism and authoritarianism. But, above all, we must face the epistemological terror that has for centuries defined the historical adventure of Latin America: believing that good intentions and beautiful words are enough to conjure reality. At this point we should know that they are not enough. We should already know that we need to rectify costly mistakes, correct wrong courses and abandon destructive customs that have condemned us, for a long time, to dwell in the anteroom of modernity.

If we do not defeat today the fears and the hypocrisy that prevent a truly free trade worldwide, if we do not encourage Latin American countries to invest their resources in life instead of death, if we do not face the increased military spending and arms trade, we will condemn our continent to be no more an eternal promise, but a final disappointment.

America, I do not invoke your name in vain, said Neruda. Indeed, when we say America, let us not talk only about good intentions, empty proclamations, or overused words. Rather, let us speak the austere language of action, facts, works, daily courage, and the genuine willingness to change. Let us just say that we are willing to make this America not a new and prodigious world, but simply a better one.

THE WORLD IS CONVERTED WITH SIMPLE BUT POWERFUL IDEAS

WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM
CANCUN, MEXICO
15 APRIL 2008

“Little by little, Latin America emerges from the shadows into the light, and defeats the demons that for so many years have haunted its progress. We cannot drop our guard, as there are new demons. Neither free trade, nor the deepening of our democracy, nor the human development of our nations will be of any use if our planet becomes uninhabitable.”

A month and a half after the death of Salvador Allende in Chile, in 1973, the great Mexican writer Octavio Paz published his essay *Los centuriones de Santiago*, in which he expressed his concern about the emergence of totalitarian regimes in Latin America, and portrayed our scenario with the following words:

“The continent is becoming unbreathable. Shadows amid the shadows, blood over blood, corpses over corpses: Latin America becomes a huge and tremendous monument made of the ruins left from the ideas and the bones of the victims.”

35 years later, in the same country that produced that genius and Nobel Literature Laureate, we can affirm that ours is no longer a region of shadows, but it is still far from being a region of light. The demons of the past no longer rule our destiny, but they certainly constitute forces that we have not yet fully extinguished: autarkic ambitions and trade protectionism; populism and anti-democratic rhetoric; the postponement of the most basic needs of all our citizens, particularly education; and the persistent arms race; these are all burdens that we still carry and that we must abandon if we are to lay the foundations for a better future.

Latin America is a singular region. Having arrived late for the appointment with development, Latin America lives simultaneously in

feudalism and postmodernity. Our concerns range from the eradication of slums, to broadband connectivity; from the universalization of access to drinking water, to the challenge of making our free trade with developed nations be truly free. This may explain the fact that any approach to Latin American economy should begin with an approach to its democracy and human development. We share with developed countries the concern to ensure sustained economic growth, to control inflation and to attract more direct foreign investment; but at the same time, we have to deal with the need of creating efficient and transparent States, capable of responding to the demands of citizens, and of distributing both economic and political power more equitably; all these concerns most of developed countries have already ceased to have. Almost everything has been said in relation to free trade in this forum. So, I would like to start speaking about democracy today. It is a fact that in the years to come we will see a slowdown in the economic growth of Latin America. This is difficult to deal with for any region, but it is much more difficult to deal with for a region that does not have good governance indexes and of adherence of citizens to democratic institutions. A region where individuals, particularly investors, cannot trust the public policies promoted by the Executive Power, nor the laws approved by the Legislative Power, nor the resolutions issued by the Judicial Power, will have less capacity to respond to global economic challenges. Only if we achieve coordinated responses and common sacrifices in our nations, which derive from the trust of individuals in the democratic system, we will be able to minimize the harmful effects of the economic recession on our neighbour and main business partner. Making the State more efficient, more transparent, more capable of improving the living conditions of our peoples, is an essential challenge to achieve a higher economic and social development.

I say this also because few opportunities are as conducive to a resurgence of authoritarian demagoguery and delusions as an economic crisis. If Latin America does not wish to return to the trenches of repression, it better assure right away all its citizens at least the minimum conditions for a dignifying life. If our nations do not make an enormous effort to increase their social spending, particularly their spending on education, our citizens will fall resoundingly under the spell of messianism, and the conquests that with time, blood and pain we have achieved, may vanish into thin air.

I have always said that governing is like choosing. We should be very clear about our priorities more than ever, and few things are so urgent in Latin America as greater investment in health, housing, science and technology, and education for our inhabitants.

In lean years, what counts is the wheat that we have in the barn. I ask you, what is the point of having arms in the barn? What is the point of having tanks and rockets? What is the point of having military helicopters and tens of thousands of soldiers, in a region that –with the sole exception of Colombia– does not currently experience any armed conflict? According to figures from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), in 2006 Latin American military spending increased to \$ 32.6 billion, a figure that has increased 24% in real terms in the past twelve years. This is alarming, especially if we take into consideration that, as the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) informs us, between 1991 and 2005 Latin America increased its health spending from 3.1% of GDP to 3.4%, that is, just 9.7%; and its housing spending remained unchanged at 1.2% of GDP.

Although our spending on education in relation to GDP has increased considerably in recent years, this has not been enough: one in three teenagers has never attended secondary school, and only one in every ten manage to graduate from college. What is this but the most obvious symbol of irrationality and historical blindness? I have said it many times and I will not tire of repeating it: today's failures in education are tomorrow's failures in economy.

Developed countries, home to less than 10% of the world's teenagers, spend more than half of the whole world budget in education. American writer Thomas Friedman advises that, out of the almost 12,000 universities and higher education centres in the world, 4,000 are located only in the United States, that is, approximately one third. Out of the 200 best universities according to the ranking prepared by the London newspaper *The Times*, only 3 are from Latin America, and none of them fall within the 100 best. If we want to lay the foundations for a better future, we should start by investing more in the salaries of our teachers and professors, in the infrastructure of our schools and colleges, in scholarships for our universities and, above all, in the learning of other languages, and access to information technologies and knowledge.

In the past 25 years, out of the total increase in production worldwide, 88% comes from improvements in technology, and only 12% comes from the expansion of current production systems. It is clear, then, that we must start investing much more in science and technology, if we want to take the leap to the development our nations deserve.

Investing more in education and technology will undoubtedly imply sacrifices. Sacrifices such as the money invested in each Sukhoi Su-30k aircraft, which costs around \$34 million, which would be useful to buy our students around 200 thousand computers from the MIT Media Lab. Sacrifices such as the money invested in each Black Hawk helicopter, worth at around \$6 million, which could be used to pay for a scholarship of \$100 a month to 5,000 young Latin Americans for a whole year. The decision should be evident.

For all this, today I want to submit to your consideration two proposals that my government is promoting internationally: The Costa Rica Consensus (*Refer to speech "A future at the scale of our dreams", 19/09/2006*) and the Arms Trade Treaty (*Refer to speech "A future at the scale of our dreams", 19/09/2006*). With your help, these two proposals can become a reality. I have not brought here magical formulas.

Latin America has already had enough of these. I only intend to give a realistic contribution to some of the problems that are presented to us, and that are part of the obstacles that have prevented us from achieving further development. After all, the world is transformed with simple but powerful ideas. Or as Octavio Paz says in the same essay I have quoted at the beginning: *"It is not about founding paradises but about giving real answers to the reality of our problems. We need, in equal doses, both political imagination and intellectual sobriety. Latin America is a continent of rhetoricians and violent people –two forms of arrogance and two ways of ignoring reality."*

Little by little, Latin America emerges from the shadows into the light, and defeats the demons that for so many years have haunted its progress. We cannot drop our guard, as there are new demons. Neither free trade, nor the deepening of our democracy, nor the human development of our peoples will be of any use if our planet becomes uninhabitable. Global warming and the accelerating destruction of the environment are concerns that we must address if we are to lay the foundations for a promising life for humanity. This is the last request that

I want to make to you, but I raise it to you with particular vehemence: it is time for Latin America, and the world, to declare *Peace with Nature*.

This is not a cordial statement, empty of content. It is a commitment undertaken by Costa Rica, in addition to increasingly more nations in the world.

By 2021, when we will celebrate 200 years of Independence, we have resolved to be a neutral country in terms of carbon emissions. Other nations such as Norway and New Zealand, are also acting in this sense. Meanwhile, we intend to considerably increase our forest cover—which already occupies more than 50% of our territory—and to improve the systems of biological corridors for our endangered species. This year, our goal is to plant a total of 7 million trees, which makes us the country with the largest number of trees per capita and per square kilometre in the world. We are a small country, but we have taken on the challenge of progressing without destroying, of advancing without extinguishing. I ask you today to do the same.

I know this room gathers all kinds of opinions on what are the best routes to be followed by Latin America in matters of economic policy. But I hope that in terms of democracy, human development and nature, we know how to choose the only possible route: the route of life. Of free life. Of dignifying life. Of possible life.

FELLOWS IN THE ROAD AND PARTNERS IN THE PROGRESS

ANNUAL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS
OF THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION
MIAMI, FLORIDA
26 FEBRUARY 2009

"We should never forget that, in almost the entire American continent, we are at the peak of democracy. We have left behind the brutal swamps we were stuck in due to civil war and dictatorship. We have crossed the dangerous trenches of conflict, and we have reached a better form of dialogue. We have endured winds of discord, poverty and famine. We have put one foot behind the other; and we have advanced step by step, guided by our faith in the value of freedom and in the capacity of our nations."

I am deeply thankful for the opportunity that you are giving me today to be part of this event. Thanks to Mr. Strobe Talbott and to the Board of Administration of this historic institution, for their huge kindness and true interest in Latin America. And thanks, above all, to Dr. Kevin Casas, an admirable man whom I have the privilege of calling my friend. I am not exaggerating if I tell you that Brookings Institution has among its members one of the most brilliant minds in Costa Rica and Latin America, which knows very well how to pursue peace, human development and justice, as well as professing friendship, hard work and intellectual honesty. In Kevin you can find an advocate for man's best causes, and an example of his best practices.

Henry David Thoreau used to say that the greatest compliment anyone ever did to him was asking him what he thought, and having listened to his answer. I am very flattered that you have invited me to share some of my thoughts with you, although I have come here more as a learner than as a teacher. Tonight, I want to speak a little about my vision of relations between the United States and Latin America, which in my opinion has been, and continues to be, one of the most obvious

and least exploited alliances in the history of international relations. For a common spectator, nothing would have been more essential than the deep understanding between two parts of the same continent, between countries that saw the light almost at the same time and from the same ideas and values; countries that did not fight for their Independence against each other, but side by side. It is a great irony of the American continent that nations that were sisters still have not figured out how to be neighbours.

Actually, our neighbouring background entails all types of sins. Latin America still bears the scars of violent interventions and cruel neglects by the United States; and the United States also carries the traumas of dealing with a region that is sometimes sane and sometimes crazy, sometimes mature and sometimes childish, sometimes democratic and sometimes dictatorial, sometimes friendly and sometimes hostile. We have disappointed each other once and again. Once and again, we have come closer and drifted apart, like endless waves of a senseless sea, like the needle of a metronome that marks the tempo of a duet that never reaches harmony. Solving this erratic behaviour should be one of foreign affairs priorities of all the countries throughout the continent, but particularly of the United States, which seems to be the only country in the world that does not realize how much it needs Latin America, and how many fruits it can reap from a true alliance with it.

While the Asian nations intensify their commercial relations with the Latin American nations, and their Presidents visit our region; while Latin America opens embassies in the Arab world, and the Middle East strengthens its ties to the south of this city; while Europe is about to sign its first region-to-region association agreement with Central America, strengthening its presence throughout the continent; the United States seems to be averting its eyes. And just as the blind Tiresias could see what Odysseus did not know, so does the world sense what the United States still does not understand: that Latin America has not only grown, but has also matured, and that the time to treat it with condescension is over.

Latin America is today a region to be treated seriously. A region that, with the only exception of Cuba, is entirely democratic for the first time in history. A region that, as warned by this same institution a few months ago, supplies the United States with more than 30% of its petroleum imports, more than half of its population born abroad, and a fifth of its total exports and imports. Until now we have been fellows in

the road, but we can be fellows in the never-ending endeavour of human progress, provided we are able to avoid at least three historical traps that have plagued the course of our relations: the trap of protectionism, the trap of military spending in detriment of human development, and the trap of monomania.

The devastating international crisis we are currently experiencing has seen the resurgence of nationalist speeches in all regions of the world. United States calls the shots on this matter. The discussion in recent days of a “Buy American” clause in the Recovery and Reinvestment Plan for the United States, and the evident reluctance that the United States Congress has shown to approve the Free Trade Agreements with Colombia and Panama, are worrying symptoms of a shift in a policy of trade opening equally promoted by the Democratic and Republican governments. Despite the immediate political returns that this type of attitudes can bring, they have serious economic, political and social costs in the long term, of which the most evident one is a new wave of migration to the United States.

As long as the discussion on migration focuses only on border control and on the legal situation of immigrants, more and more people will cross rivers, seas and walls to seek conditions that they could not find in their own nations. Attacking the causes of migration, and not only its consequences, should be one of the main goals of strengthening a foreign policy based on trade opening and on the creation of opportunities for developing nations.

Now well, both trade protectionism and excessive military spending, which almost always occurs in detriment of development, can curtail our future. This is an issue that does not seem to enter into the discussion on the best ways to deal with the current international economic crisis, and I am surprised that this is the case.

We have passionate discussions about a financial rescue of \$700 billion, and about an economic recovery plan of approximately \$800 billion, and yet the world says nothing of the \$1.3 trillion that this year will be used for military spending, to feed the stomach of missiles instead of children, to pay hordes of soldiers and not doctors. Many nations have already announced the cutting of their social programmes in light of the international crisis, and yet military spending continues to climb, without anyone seeming to understand its high opportunity cost.

Meanwhile, the international aid granted by the countries of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD),

during 2007, barely exceeded \$100 billion, and this is still at an average of 0.3% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of these countries, and 0.17% in the case of the United States. Very far from its commitment to dedicate at least 0.7% of its GDP to development aid.

Paraphrasing an expression from Booker T. Washington, one wonders if developed countries will someday make their wealth affect us as much as our poverty affects them.

This in addition to the fact that we are not only lagging behind in quantitative terms, but also in qualitative terms. In other words, we spend little and we spend it in the wrong way. We have failed to ensure that development aid be indeed destined to development, and as a consequence, we spend billions of dollars to expand opportunities for nations whose governments spend billions of dollars to expand their military apparatuses.

Latin America brings an eloquent example. According to figures from the International Institute for Strategic Studies, military spending in the region last year amounted to \$ 47.2 billion, compared to \$ 24.7 billion in 2003, an increase of 91% in the past 5 years. Latin America has started an arms race, no matter what euphemisms are used to cover it up; moreover, there are other regions in the world that insist on complaining about their perennial delay in human development indexes, while squandering their resources on an arsenal that, in the best scenario, constitutes a capital waste, and in the worst, come to be the fuel for armed conflicts such as those that have washed out our existence with blood since immemorial times.

I can proudly say that Costa Rica is not part of this madness. We became the first country to abolish its army and declare peace to the world 60 years ago. If we had not made such historic decision, we would spend per year, according to the regional average in relation to GDP, more than \$150 million in our armed forces, half of what our Ministry of Public Education will allocate in 2009 to high school education, and 5 times more than the total budget of the Ministry of Culture and Youth. We have educated people because we have unarmed people, and although we do not expect that the rest of the nations follow our footsteps, we do consider that our example shows better than any other how much Latin America can advance if it decreases, even in minimal proportions, its military spending.

For this reason, my Government has introduced the Costa Rica Consensus (*Refer to speech "A future at the scale of our dreams"*,

19/09/2006). The support of institutions such as Brookings is key to turn this initiative into reality.

The last trap that the United States should avoid when dealing with Latin America is the monomania with which its leaders insist on treating our region. The United States and Latin America continue to communicate primarily on a very limited variety of issues: trade, drug trafficking, and immigration. These are crucial matters, but there are many other common interests that we have ignored. The United States continues painting Latin America with the same rough, thick brush. Not long ago, a President made his first trip to South America, and upon his return he limited himself to saying: *"You would be surprised— they are all individual countries."*

Even today we fight against this kind of generalizations. If a tiny country like Costa Rica is so noticeably different from its immediate neighbours in Central America, how on Earth can it be put all together with Haiti, Chile or Brazil? How can the United States ignore the fact that there is not just one, but many and varied, complex and overlapping Latin Americas? There are countries that need special support for trade and innovation, and other countries that require support for security and fight against drug trafficking; there are countries that enjoy sophisticated democratic systems, and other countries whose institutional framework is more than precarious. There are countries that export chips and medical equipment, and other countries whose economy is still based on agriculture for survival. The boat of monolithic and monothematic Latin America was missed a long time ago. It is time to establish a respectful and conscious commitment to the many nuances that cross the region.

76 years ago, Franklin Delano Roosevelt spoke of the "Good Neighbour" policy. I wonder if it will not be time to build the "Good Friend" policy. Time for us to look into each other's eyes, as friends; to speak face to face, as friends; to treat each other equally, as friends; to seek the mutual benefit, mutual understanding and mutual respect, as friends do. This possibility is more likely today than ever. Our world is going through a dark valley of economic difficulty, but we should never forget that, in almost the entire American continent, we are at the peak of democracy. We have left behind the brutal swamps we were stuck in due to civil war and dictatorship. We have crossed the dangerous trenches of conflict, and we have reached a better form of

dialogue. We have endured winds of discord, poverty and famine. We have put one foot behind the other, and we have advanced step by step, guided by our faith in the value of freedom and in the capacity of our peoples. We owe these achievements to the blood of our soldiers, to the dedication of our founders, to the sweat of our workers, and to the patience of our diplomats, in every single part of our continent. If we waste these achievements, if we go backwards on the path of progress that we have travelled, we will be disappointing those men and women, and postponing the solutions that we have been awaiting for centuries.

The great author and Nobel Literature Laureate, Octavio Paz, once wrote that: *"America is not only a tradition to continue but also a future to fulfil."* Today, that future is closer than ever. I know that the light of possibility that has emerged in our region will illuminate our path in the darkest hour.

WE MUST HAVE DONE SOMETHING WRONG

SUMMIT OF THE AMERICAS
TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO
18 APRIL 2009

“The value system of the 20th Century, which seems to be same one we are applying in the 21st Century, is wrong”.

I am under the impression that each time that Caribbean and Latin American countries meet up with the President of the United States of America, it is to request or to complain. Almost always, it is to blame the United States for all our past, present and future evils. I do not think that is entirely fair.

We cannot forget that Latin America had universities before the United States founded Harvard and William & Mary, the first universities of that country. We cannot forget that, in this continent, as in the rest of the world, at least until year 1750, all Americans were more or less equal: they were all poor.

When the Industrial Revolution took place in England, other countries boarded the same train: Germany, France, the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand... and so the Industrial Revolution flew past Latin America like a comet, and we did not realize it. We certainly lost our chance.

There is also a big difference. When one reads the history of Latin America, compared with the history of the United States, one understands that Latin America did not have a Spanish or Portuguese John Winthrop, coming with a Bible in his hand to build “*a city on a hill*”, a gleaming city, as was intended by the pilgrims who arrived in the United States of America.

50 years ago, Mexico was richer than Portugal. In 1950, a country like Brazil had a higher per capita income than South Korea. 60 years ago, Honduras had more per capita wealth than Singapore while, nowadays, Singapore –in a matter of 35 to 40 years– has an annual

income of \$40 thousand per inhabitant. Well, we Latin Americans must have done something wrong.

What did we do wrong? I cannot list all the things we have done wrong. To start, our average education enrolment rate is of 7 years. That is the average length of schooling for Latin America, which is not the case for most Asian countries. It is certainly not the case for countries like the United States and Canada, who have the best education in the world, similar to that of the Europeans. In some Latin American countries, only 1 out of 10 students who enter high school actually completes it. Some countries have a child mortality rate of 50 deaths per 1000 live births, while the average in the more advanced Asian countries is 8, 9 or 10.

We have countries whose tax burden is 12% of their Internal Gross Product, and it is nobody's fault except ours that we do not charge money to the richest people in the country. Nobody is to blame for that, except ourselves.

In 1950, an American citizen was 4 times richer than a Latin American citizen. Nowadays, an American citizen is 10, 15 or 20 times richer than a Latin American one. That is not America's fault, it is ours.

I have made reference to a fact which is, in my opinion, grotesque, and only shows that the value system of the 20th Century, which seems to be same one we are applying in the 21st Century, is wrong. Because it simply cannot be that the wealthy world pays \$100 billion to relieve the poverty of 80% of the world's population—in a planet that has 250 million human beings living on \$2 a day— and spends 13 times more (\$1.3 trillion) on weapons and soldiers.

It simply cannot be that Latin America spends \$50 billion on weapons and soldiers. I wonder, who is our enemy? The enemy, President Correa, of that equality you very rightly point out, is the lack of education; illiteracy; not spending on our people's health; not building the necessary infrastructure, paths, roads, ports, airports; not allocating the necessary resources to stop the degradation of the environment; the shameful inequality we have is the product, among many things, of not providing an education to our sons and daughters.

One goes to a Latin American University and feels as if we were still living in the 60s, 70s, or 80s. It appears we have forgotten that, on 9 November 1989, something very important happened with the fall of the Wall of Berlin: the world changed. We need to accept this

is a different world, and I frankly think that nearly all the academics, all the people of thought, all the economists, all the historians, agree that the 21st Century is the century of Asians, not of Latin Americans. Sadly, I agree with them. Because while we keep discussing ideologies, discussing all the “isms” (which one is better? capitalism, socialism, communism, liberalism, neoliberalism, Christian-socialism...), the Asians found a very realist “ism” for the 21st Century and the late 20th Century: *pragmatism*.

Just to quote an example, let us remember that when Deng Xiaoping visited Singapore and South Korea and realized that his neighbours were getting rich very rapidly, he returned to Beijing and said to his old Maoist comrades, who had accompanied him in the Long March: *“Well, it doesn’t matter whether a cat is black or white, as long as it catches mice”*. And if Mao had been alive, he would have died again when Xiaoping said that *“to get rich is glorious”*. While the Chinese do this, and since 79 to this day they have grown at a rate of 11%, 12% or 13%, managing to get 300 million inhabitants out of poverty, we are still discussing ideologies we should have buried long ago.

The good news is that Deng Xiaoping managed to do all this when he was 74 years old. Looking around, dear Presidents, I do not see anybody who is close to being 74. For this reason, I ask you: let us not wait until that age to make the changes that we need to do.

QUO VADIS, LATIN AMERICA?

BUSINESS SUMMIT IN MONTERREY
MONTERREY, MEXICO
8 NOVEMBER 2009

"It is time for Latin America to leave self-pity behind and to learn the difficult art of self-criticism. It is time for our governments to abandon their propensity to be creative in making excuses instead of giving solutions, in apologizing but not devising concrete policies. That is, it is time for Latin America to finally acknowledge its responsibility in history".

In a masterly essay about the origin and meaning of America, the great Alfonso Reyes, a literary giant in Spanish language, born in this land of Regiomontana, says that *"Before being this firm reality, which at times enthuses us and at others makes us uneasy, America was the invention of poets, the charade of geographers, the hearsay of adventurers, the greed of enterprises, and, in sum, an inexplicable appetite and impulse for transcending the limits". There comes a time when the omen can be read on all foreheads, gleaming on the eyes of sailors, stealing the slumber of humanists and communicating to trade a decorum of knowledge and the heat of a feat".*

There was a time when one could stop any globetrotter on his way and ask: *"Where are you going, traveller?"*, and hear from his lips, trembling with impatience: *"I am going to America, to the New World, to El Dorado, to the Eden on Earth"*. There was a time when our continent was like a boiler capable of melting all the hopes of an ancient order, thirsty for a restart, for a *clean slate*. We had the difficult historical mission of vindicating for the human species all the trampled dignity, all the adulterated peace, all the lost innocence that centuries and centuries of civilization had accumulated on the world's shoulders. Today, all that has changed.

Our continent has ceased to be a hallucination and became an immediate reality, which sometimes exceeds and sometimes dashes our

expectations. The travellers' compasses no longer point to our lands. The roads no longer lead to America, at least not to Latin America. Rather, it is Latin America who must find its own course. To her we must ask: "*Quo Vadis, Latin America?* Where are you going amid the confusion of this birth of the millennium?"

As much as I love this region and as much as I would like to turn a blind eye to its flaws, I cannot help but think that we are not doing things right. That we are groping our way in the course of history. That our Latin America will remain a promise as long as it fails to seriously take on its own task. This region of madmen and enthusiasts, of Quixotes and eternal adolescents, must now grow up. It is time that we understand that nobody will bring us higher development on a silver platter. It is us, and nobody else, who must work on it. It is time for Latin America to leave self-pity behind and to learn the difficult art of self-criticism. It is time for our governments to abandon their propensity to be creative in making excuses instead of giving solutions, in apologizing but not devising concrete policies. That is, it is time for Latin America to finally acknowledge its responsibility in history.

That historical responsibility begins by facing a harsh but inevitable question: Why have we stayed behind? Why the region that would become the New World, the fair world, the world of opportunities, ended up settling for traveling on the second to last wagon of progress?

Contrary to what many people think, and to what some are trying to sell, the reasons behind this are not all historical. When most of Latin America became independent from Spain, by the early 19th Century, the conditions for development were similar or even better than in the United States, the Middle East, or Southeast Asia.

According to a historical study published by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OCED), in the year 1500, the actual Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of Mexico was 4 times higher than the GDP of the United States. Around 1820, Latin America's GDP exceeded by 12.5% the GDP of its northern neighbour. However, in 1998, with the exception of Brazil, the region barely represented a third of the American economy. A cover of the London weekly *The Economist*, published in 1988, classified Ireland as "*the poorest among the rich*". Less than ten years later, everybody called it "*the Celtic tiger*". Singapore was an insignificant little island struggling for independence in Southeast Asia, while our economies journeyed through the different

variants of the import substitution model. In spite of having no natural resources, South Korea's economy multiplied by ten between 1960 and 1990.

The responsibility to jump on the locomotive of development was ours, and we let it pass by. Futile is the succession of tantrums thrown by "caudillos", past and present, who intend to blame everyone for our misfortunes. The reason behind our backwardness is somewhere between Rio Bravo and Cape Horn. And to recognize this fact is taking the first step to greater development. Tonight I want to mention four cultural obstacles I consider essential to explain this phenomenon, which I think we need to change as soon as possible if we aspire to build a better future for our peoples: the proverbial Latin American resistance to change and our inability to adapt to new circumstances; the resulting scarcity of innovation, based on our fear to take risks, supplemented by a conformist and mediocre zeal; the continuous disregard for the rule of law and the mechanisms of democratic institutionality, as well as the macabre authoritarian and military temptation that, like a shadow, haunts our region since its birth.

The first cultural obstacle I mentioned is resistance to change in Latin America. I believe that, from all the regions in the world, none clings more to the past than ours. None is so attached to a status quo that, on the other hand, is terribly insufficient. This is the region of "*Better the devil you know than the devil you don't*", which does not cease to surprise me. Because the devil we know is that a third of the population lives in poverty. The devil we know is that a third of students never enter high school. The devil we know is that, in some places, there are more jobs available in gangs and in drug trafficking networks than in companies and stores. And still, Latin Americans are terribly afraid of change. They prefer clinging to the past because they trust that such past, no matter of how dire it is, will be better than an uncertain future. This was essentially clear in the discussion held in Costa Rica, a little more than two years ago, by reason of the celebration of the first referendum in our history, where it was to be decided on the approval of the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the United States, Central America and the Dominican Republic. The Costa Ricans who opposed to the agreement were not happy with their circumstances, but they were terrified of what might happen should those circumstances changed. I told them a phrase used by John Maynard Keynes in his

reply to an impertinent journalist: *“When facts change, I change my mind. What do you do, sir?”*

Resistance to change is the best way to perpetuate our underdevelopment. Furthermore, it is the open recognition of the will to perpetuate it out of fear, indolence and, many times, out of ideological fanaticism. In our continent there is a whole horde of advocates for *“the true Christian- socialism”, “the true social democracy”, “the true liberalism”, “the true socialism”*, meaning those of parents or grandparents, from forty or fifty years ago. How do we expect to make progress if the highest aspiration of these nations is permanence, or even regression?

The globalized world calls for a change. A time has come when we must not decide if we want to be transformed or not, we must not discuss whether our ideologies permit us to change or not. It is time to see how fast and advantageous our inevitable process of change will be. Adaptability to new circumstances is the key to measure the progress of nations in the decades to come. The countries who fail at this task will walk to the future with eyes on their back, exactly as Latin America has been walking over the past years.

The second cultural obstacle which prevents us to aspire to greater development is the lack of innovation in the region. If we are resistant to change coming from the outside, with greater reason we will avoid promoting change from within our nations. We do not want to innovate because we see innovation as a risk we are not willing to take. We evade competition because it threatens some established rights and privileges, and we would rather become outdated than overplay our hand. The most remarkable consequence of all this is the mediocrity that has been brewing for decades.

How can we build a continent of excellence if we often punish initiative, instead of rewarding it? How can we build a developed continent when we have more comptrollers than entrepreneurs? How can we move forward if the spending on research and innovation is a marginal item in the budgets of our state apparatuses?

A study carried out last year showed that from the overall increase in production over the past 25 years, 88% results from technology improvements, while only 12% stems from the expansion of the existing production systems. Latin America must grasp this, and it must grasp it soon.

Resistance to change and innovation is evident in many aspects of our daily lives, but nowhere is it more obvious than in the curriculum taught in our schools, colleges and universities. Many times, I have said that I am worried because Latin America is graduating professionals who would have been able to find a job in the world of 30 years ago but lack the tools to function in present times. To give an example, our region graduates six professionals in social sciences, business and law, for every professional graduated in exact sciences, and for every two engineering professionals. I am not saying that social scientists are unnecessary. I am just saying they are not thrice as necessary as engineers. And I can assure you that job positions are created in inverse proportion to the number of graduates in each field.

The scientists who analysed this phenomenon agree that our students need to acquire modern skills that allow them to function in a deeply diverse and interconnected world. They must speak, understand and think in foreign languages. They must be proficient with information systems. They must conduct a critical and creative analysis of the complex global challenges we face, from sustainable development to international trade, from global epidemics to the eradication of poverty. They must be capable of understanding rather than memorizing, of arguing rather than reciting. Tonight, I ask you: is this what we are teaching them?

According to international evaluations, our students are among the worst in the world in reading comprehension, well below the youths who come from countries where the State spends, on average, less money on education than ours. It is clear that we need to make a quantitative change in our educational investment, but it is even clearer that we also need a qualitative change.

And, in this sense, you have much to contribute. It is the private sector that must express their needs, the type of professionals to whom they can offer quality jobs. Costa Rica has had very satisfactory experiences in this field. An alliance between the Government, the private sector and the academia has allowed us to launch a National English Plan, through which we expect to achieve that, by 2017, 100% of the youths graduating from school can master the English language to a certain degree. Together with Omar Dengo Foundation, Intel, Hewlett Packard and other companies holding offices in the country, we have significantly increased connectivity in our education centres. Several Costa Rican companies have agreed to launch a vocational guidance

campaign, encouraging our youths to choose careers that are highly valued in the market. Together, we have been creating an educational culture for the 21st Century. Intensifying and reproducing this type of initiatives is a crucial step for the change of mentality that Latin America so urgently needs.

The third cultural obstacle I mentioned is the continuous disregard for the rule of law and the democratic institutionality in the region. I have spoken about this topic in all kinds of forums and auditoriums, precisely because it affects the lives of all the inhabitants. It is certainly an aspect which affects the way of doing business in Latin America. Imagine, for a moment, a region where the rules that govern trade and production are clear and known by everybody; where procedures are carried out promptly, with no need for paying bribes or making several requests; where any conflict can be settled in court, be tried rapidly and impartially; where citizen security permits to do business with ease; where all the international treaties and agreements are respected, and universal standards are applied to promote trade between countries with different legislations. Is that not the region we all want? Is that not the region that would allow Latin America to grow and thrive?

Respecting democratic institutionality means so much more than voting every 4, 5 or 6 years. It means understanding that some rules of the game admit no exceptions. It means understanding that the rule of law is fairer than the rule of men. It means understanding that power must be distributed if it pretends to be legitimate, and that respecting the institutions wielding that power is the best way not to endure any trouble. It means understanding that democracy, with all of its errors and flaws, is the only political system that respects and promotes the realization of free individuals. Strengthening institutionality and giving substance to our democracies should be the first priority of all our governments, but also of all our entrepreneurs. I have still to mention one cultural obstacle which

I have fought my entire political life: the long-lasting military tutelage of the region. I see some young faces among you. But I can also see that winter has begun to whiten the hair of many. You remember what dictatorship was like. You remember what it was like to watch on TV the shattered bodies of people that may not have been our children but were somebody else's children. The fearful face of young men dressed as soldiers, who may not have been our neighbours, but were somebody else's neighbours. The desperate cry of a tortured woman,

who may not have been our mother, but was somebody else's mother. Whoever remembers those images cannot but be horrified by the idea that, this year, amid an international crisis, Latin America is spending almost \$60 billion on weapons and soldiers.

A region that has never been this peaceful, this democratic, who had finally abandoned the hosts of tyranny and violence, seems to be in a hurry to return to hell. It would suffice to see the procession of rockets and rifles, combat planes and helicopter gunship, to understand the tremendous waste this entails. A procession that marches past thousands of schools in precarious conditions, thousands of clinics without medical equipment, thousands of dumps and slums, thousands of destroyed forests and contaminated watersheds. It is the indifference of a death parade that we must reject at the top of our voices and with the full force of our thoughts. Each one of the billion dollars spent on armies conspires against our development and constitutes an affront to the generations who deserve a different youth than the one we had to live.

If the painful experience of Honduras has taught us anything, it is that strengthening armies in Latin America almost always means weakening democracies. Abandoning the recourse to violence and embracing a culture of peace are essential for the change of mentality I have been talking about. Tonight, I ask you to help us build a region where chips are traded instead of weapons; where businessmen are trained instead of soldiers; where the power of ideas, not of armies, is sought. That is the America which gave rise to the adventurer utopias, and that is the America still awaiting the horizon where the caravels of our most daring hopes are headed.

I hope that my words have at least left a small light in the dark, a blinking light reminding us that another Latin America is possible. In response to Alfonso Reyes, I would say to that great thinker from Monterrey that there may be some truth in the omen of a new world, maybe not the ravings of those travellers who accompanied Columbus through his sea voyages, but the omen of a better region, a region we can build out of sheer will and feeling. A region where change, both from the outside and the inside, is not feared; a region where democracy continues to fuel the freedom of human beings, and where war and weapons cease to exist, in the twilight of our eagerness to grow and improve ourselves.

THE TRAIN TO PROSPERITY

III MINISTERIAL MEETING OF THE INITIATIVE
ROADS TO PROSPERITY IN THE AMERICAS
SAN JOSE, COSTA RICA
4 MARCH 2010

“In order to sit at the banquet of prosperity, developing countries must dress for the occasion.”

It is my profound honour to welcome you to my country, to open up the doors of this Costa Rican house that hosts, within a few acres of land, the most fervent hopes of humanity. Many times we have welcomed you in this house as friends, as fellows, as neighbours. This afternoon, I want to welcome you as partners. Partners in the enterprise of creating a better future for our nations. Partners in the unfinished journey through the “*Roads to prosperity*”.

Too often, the roads of Latin America have been “*roads to posterity*”. This region has postponed for centuries its leap into development. This is the region that always leaves everything for the next government, the next generation, or the next ice age. Latin America is the eternal tenant in the anteroom of progress; for this reason, I am happy to see her create alliances to finally cross the threshold of prosperity. This will require bravery and courage from us. But, above all, it will require maturity and rationality. I trust that this meeting will yield the sensibility that our region needs, a sensibility that forces us to admit that we must urgently increase our commercial integration and our competitiveness.

Talking about commercial integration is still hard in a large part of our America, still walled behind the ruins of worn-out ideologies. It is so quaint to hear discussions about whether or not we should favour trade opening in our region. As if it were an option! The economic integration of the world cannot be chosen. The economic integration of the world must be accepted. It is a force, not a decision. It so happens that it is, besides, an advantageous force.

With all its errors and weaknesses, free trade has been the most powerful tool for development available to humankind in recent

times, particularly for the poorest countries of the world. It has also been the bastion of a foreign policy that produces specific results for people's lives, not just flowery statements in international summits. I am convinced that friendship between the nations of America continues to grow with each container unloaded in a port, with each international flight landing at a terminal, with each foreign investor settling their company in a new place, with each of the greetings we may give each other in meetings like this one.

Small nations, such as the Central American ones, are doomed to be the Phoenicians of modern era, due to the size of our markets and because we produce things we do not consume and consume things we do not produce. The alternative we face is as raw as simple: either we export an increasing number of goods and services, or we export an increasing number of people. Poverty does not need a passport to travel. Industrialized nations should prefer reducing barriers to foreign products than setting up walls to stop a flow of immigrants that will not cease as long as the immense disparities between our nations persist.

Understanding this is essential. Especially amid a devastating international economic crisis that threatens to destroy everything we have so patiently built. Many have rushed to object to certain instruments like the Free Trade Agreements, making us the target of general resentment. Let us be very careful: the problems of our economies cannot be solved by returning to the age of cavemen, by chasing autarchic mirages, or by cultivating the utopia of food self-sufficiency. America has already wandered in that dead end street. For those who do not remember, experience has left us indebted, impoverished, and in the most dreadful productive inefficiency.

That was the state of affairs we found in the country in the early 1980s. It was then that we decided to begin, by our own free will, a unilateral opening of the Costa Rican economy. We knew this would cause a reduction in prices, both of end consumer products and of capital goods for the domestic entrepreneurs. Time has proven us right.

Nowadays, Costa Rica's economy is much more stable, much more reliable and much more successful than it was during the years when I was President for the first time.

If we aspire to prosperity, we should not get off the train of free trade. On the contrary, we must make sure that more and more individuals can ride it. More and more micro-entrepreneurs, more and more women, more and more inhabitants of rural areas, more and more youths, more

and more people with disabilities. More people competing with each other, not less, should be the goal of our governments.

This takes me to the second aspect I want to mention: it is useless for America to deepen its commercial integration without significantly increasing its competitiveness. This means that our nations must invest in innovation, educate their youth, teach them computer science and languages, strengthen the rule of law, fight insecurity, build infrastructure, improve their fiscal health, streamline bureaucratic requirements, modernize their employment systems, promote entrepreneurship, if they want to cross the threshold they had envisioned for so long. In order to sit at the banquet of prosperity, developing countries must dress for the occasion.

Public spending should reflect this desire. Those countries that invest in weapons the resources they could invest in computers, are casting doubt on their commitment to competitiveness. Those countries protecting inefficient producers instead of promoting the creativity of new enterprises, are casting doubt on their commitment to competitiveness. Those countries allowing their youths to drop out of school, because they do not want to charge taxes to the rich, are casting doubt on their commitment to competitiveness. Markets can provide endless opportunities. But only those countries that are prepared can take advantage of them.

Herodotus says that the powerful Xerxes I, king of Persia who invaded the Hellenic Lands, ordered to build a bridge made of boats in a strait between Europe and Asia. The bridge was destroyed by the force of the sea. Enraged, Xerxes sent his executioners to give 300 lashes to the salty water, as punishment for having defied his authority.

In many senses, commercial integration is like the sea that Xerxes ordered to punish. It is an uncontrollable force. It is a force that we cannot ignore. Instead of vituperating against it, instead of whipping it by tightening our protectionist measures or resurrecting food self-sufficiency discourses, we should rather perfect the strength of our boats. We should rather check the solidity of our bridge, so that crises like this one do not happen again and cannot hurt us the same.

Maybe then, we will manage to build a fairer future for our peoples. Maybe then, we will finally cross the threshold of development. Maybe then, we will no longer meet to discuss the “Roads to prosperity”, and we will finally begin to discuss prosperity alone.

PART FOUR

THE SEED OF LIFE

WE WILL NOT RENOUNCE LIFE IN THE PLANET

PEACE WITH NATURE
SAN JOSE, COSTA RICA
10 JULY 2007

“A network of countries saying in the most varied languages, from the most varied places, under the most varied flags: ‘We will not renounce life in the planet’”.

Western literature began with the gruesome description of a macabre war: Homer’s account of the Trojan War. Since then, throughout the eras, our history has been marked by the vision of Dantesque scenarios. War after war, from one destruction to another, we have counted the years and decades, we have seen the ages and centuries pass, based on the depicted horrors of continuous wars. Our historical memory houses images of absolute annihilation. As a species, we can evoke the image of a mother marching with her children in a town that has been bombarded, seeking the remains of her home amid the ruins. We can evoke the image of a young soldier who, on his return to his home, finds nothing but smoke and rubble. We can evoke the image of a girl lost in a city up in flames, searching in tears for a hand to shake, for a door to knock on. We can evoke the image of a man who, hiding in the basement of a besieged building, prays fervently for his family to be alive. These are the images of war, of war between human beings.

Today we are here because a new Dantesque sight has emerged, one that is more likely a *foresight*: that of the war between humans and nature. Imagine an unending desert, a cracked ground too hot to stand on. Imagine a planet where life has been displaced and only cockroaches, if anything, can survive.

Imagine a world whose colour palette, so far infinite, has been reduced to a scale of greys and dark browns. Imagine polluted air, impossible to breathe. *“This is not a poor copy of John’s delirium during his exile on Patmos”*, as Gabriel García Márquez once said. I am not

describing the Apocalypse but simply the world that awaits us if we do not take action right away to declare peace with nature.

59 years ago, Costa Rica declared peace on the world and abolished its army, turning the humid walls of quarters into warm classrooms for students. 20 years ago, the moral force of our nation called the five Central American Presidents to sit around a table and sign the Peace Treaty that silenced arms in our region. Today, there is another Peace Treaty to sign, and other armies awaiting to be abolished: we must sign peace with our environment, and we must abolish the forces that destroy it.

We cannot go on like this. We are shooting carbon dioxide to our atmosphere in unprecedented levels. Acid rain falls on our fields like tiny bombs from the sky. Trees more ancient than this theatre are being felled by tractors like war tanks. Our seas are being dynamited. Our forests are being attacked. The entire world is a battlefield, and we must decide whether we want to be killing soldiers or otherwise become the signatories of a long-lasting peace with the planet. I think there are no doubts as to which of these two sides Costa Rica is standing on.

Our country decided to declare peace with nature long ago, under that same name, or under different names. Believe me, we would not have gotten this far if we had not done so. What we seek with this initiative is to give a greater boost to Costa Rica's green tendencies, is to take a quantitative and qualitative leap to take us further beyond in our struggle of keeping and preserving our natural resources.

Some may claim that, from all the countries in the world, Costa Rica is the one who should feel least obliged to take on more environmental commitments. But if we want to lead with the example, it is only fair that we admit to our own mistakes. If we are to raise a green flag of peace all over the world, then we must make sure there are no stains or holes in that flag.

It is true that we are one of the few developing countries to have recovered part of their forests over the last twenty years, but it is also true that there is garbage in many of our rivers and seas. It is true that a fourth of our entire territory is protected, but it is also true that there is some illegal logging in those and many other places. It is true that over 95% of our energy comes from renewable sources, but it is also true that we still depend on fossil fuels for transportation and for many of our daily activities. It is true that our beaches are certified for cleanliness, but it is also true that our solid waste management is insufficient and

precarious. In summary, it is true that ours is an environmentally friendly country, but it is also true that we could be much more environmentally friendly.

For this reason, I will list four actions, four commitments that will be assumed by our country at a domestic level from this moment on: carbon neutrality by year 2021, led by the Executive Power from now on; a mandatory environmental management plan for the State institutions; increased coverage of forests and protected areas; as well as the promotion, in the curricula of our schools and colleges, of sustainable development and environmental education. These commitments are *additional* to the international obligations that we have already assumed. We take on these commitments because we believe that if Costa Rica can do it, considering its tiny economy and the weight of its underdevelopment, there are no excuses for other nations not to.

First. From now on, Costa Rica undertakes to be carbon neutral (“C-Neutral”) by year 2021. This is an ambitious goal that will require the help of all citizens and the future governments. We will compensate the carbon emissions we release with equivalent doses of oxygen in such a way that, by 2021, Costa Rica does not contribute anything to global warming and the deterioration of the air we breathe. Truly, I say to you: abolishing net carbon emissions will be, for us, the equivalent to the abolition of our army by Mr. Pepe.

The Executive Power will lead this effort. For this reason, from this moment on I assume the personal commitment, and I invite all my Ministers, Vice ministers and Executive Presidents to do the same, of making all our trips abroad to be carbon neutral. How will we do this? Through a calculation of the National Forestry Financing Fund (FONAFIFO, by its initials in Spanish), each of us will personally assume the environmental cost of our foreign travel. These resources will be used by FONAFIFO to protect our forests, or for reforestation. Eventually, we will all get a certification saying that our environmental footprint from foreign travel has been offset. In this way, every time we fly to faraway places to speak about environmental responsibility, we will not only leave the white trace of airplanes in the sky, but also the green trace of human beings on Earth.

This is the first step towards neutrality in carbon emissions. Numerous actions will supplement this effort, including a significant reduction of taxes on hybrid cars and other types of vehicles running on renewable energy sources, to speed up the replacement of our vehicle

fleet with cars that do not damage the environment or contribute to global warming.

The second domestic commitment will be achieved by signing, here and now, an Executive Decree requiring all the State institutions to prepare and implement an environmental management plan.

I am convinced that the State cannot demand citizens to make a responsible use of resources, to save energy and to respect the environmental regulations, unless its own demands are met first.

For this reason, by this Decree, the Executive Power will give a clear signal that our peace is not only true and palpable, but also mandatory and led by the State.

The third commitment I have mentioned is the increase in our forest coverage and our protected areas. We will expand the Environmental Services Payment system through FONAFIFO to reach a coverage of 600 thousand hectares. We have already set off on this task. We have undertaken to plant 5 million trees during 2007, in the context of a campaign whose slogan, *“Let’s plant a tree”*, was suggested by Costa Rican youths. We have planted around 1.5 million trees and, during the rainy season, we will plant the remaining 3.5 million. This will make us the country with the highest number of trees per capita and per square kilometre in the world.

We are also expanding our biological corridor systems. We have now included a new corridor for limpets through La Cangreja National Park. These corridors permit the transit of birds and animals and ensure the environmental preservation of all species of flora and fauna, who suffer greatly with the destruction of their habitats.

Finally, from this moment on we undertake to promote the training on sustainable development and environmental education in the curricula of all schools and colleges. This is a commitment of great importance: if we intend to change the world, we must begin in our classrooms.

My generation, and many past generations, grew thinking that our duty and responsibility were to produce food. That was what they taught us at school: we had to expand the agricultural and livestock frontier of the country, we had to *“overturn the mountains”*, as they said back then, and *“overturn”* meant destroying our forests. In a letter written in 1930, my grandfather, Julio Sanchez, in reference to a man who had invaded his land, said: *“When the young man Jose Sing sold*

me 'Brazo Seco', I could have started brawls. You know that the whole land is the property of 'Taboga' and he could not sell me something that was already mine. But what I owned was a virgin mountain, and the man was selling me cornfields, pastures, a home, clean and fenced land. I bought it without objections, because it was only fair." Today, we need to fight exactly for the opposite. Our responsibility is preserving the mountains in a virgin state, our responsibility is paying to keep them that way. If we are going to make this change in practice, if we are to break with that generational legacy that tells us to "overturn the mountains", this change must begin at schools. For this reason, we will include environmental education in the school and college curricula, to make sure that our children and youths not only get used to extract trees from our nature, but also to replant forests, to multiply mangrove, and to give our species an exponential value.

We assume these four commitments throughout our entire territory. They represent the peace we made with our small strip of land. But we do not want to limit our efforts to the space within our borders, which are nothing but lines we have drawn in the air. Carbon emissions anywhere in the world cause global warming worldwide. The droughts in some areas of the planet cause famine in others. We are not a witness to the environmental damage caused by other nations, but we are its victims. For this reason, it is essential that Peace with Nature becomes an international initiative. Costa Rica may be a lighthouse in the storm, but only the entire world may become a bright sun.

Therefore, today I want to announce four actions that will be promoted by Costa Rica at an international level, in order to lead the crusade for environmental protection and against global warming: we will lead an international network of carbon neutral countries; we will encourage the creation of a global reward system for avoided deforestation, as a mechanism to ensure the conservation and preservation of primary forests; we are going to endorse the bilateral debt swap based on environmental protection; and we are going to support an international initiative to set fees for carbon dioxide emissions.

Ever since Costa Rica's intention to become a carbon neutral country became public, such intention being formalized in this event, two countries have followed our example: Norway and New Zealand. I am certain that many more will join us, and we will form an international network of carbon neutral countries that will act as a moral wall against

the selfish ambitions of some, who pretend to continue profiting at the expense of our future.

A network of countries saying in the most varied languages, from the most varied places, under the most varied flags: ‘We will not renounce life in the planet’”.

The second action I will promote internationally from now is the creation of a reward system for those countries with primary forests, so that they can have an incentive not to deforest them. One of the clearest flaws of the Kyoto Protocol is including a mechanism for those who reforest, but not for those who do not deforest.

The difference is essential: the destruction of primary forests brings disastrous consequences for the world, which cannot be repaired by reforestation, however intensive. Reforestation cannot protect the watersheds already destroyed, it cannot recover the ecosystems already damaged, it cannot re-establish the biological cycles already interrupted. Think, for a moment, about the Venus of Milo or the Victory of Samothrace; think about the frescoes of the Sistine Chapel or the cave paintings of the Altamira Cave; think about the Pyramids of Giza or the Chinese Wall, none of these pieces could be rebuilt, none could be replaced if they were destroyed. The same happens with primary forests. They are our planet’s work of art. We cannot expect to replace them with reforested forests, as we cannot expect to substitute the Taj Mal for a replica.

Reforestation should always be a Plan B. To achieve this, countries like Costa Rica, Congo, Papua New Guinea and Brazil, must get incentives allowing them to preserve their primary forests. It is not fair that the nations which developed at the expense of the most ravaging environmental destruction now ask us to develop while protecting the air they breathe, without giving anything in return.

The third action we will promote abroad is the implementation of mechanisms for bilateral foreign debt swaps aimed at the preservation of the environment. The world may begin to asphyxiate in a few years from now, but the developing countries have felt asphyxiated for a long time. The overwhelming weight of unpayable bilateral debt, whose interests rise as the foam in a contaminated river, have been drowning these countries for many years now. History offers industrialized countries a unique opportunity: to give some breathing space to developing countries, in exchange for some breaths of fresh air.

Countries like Rwanda, Burundi, Congo and Ghana need reasons to preserve their forests, reasons somewhat more palpable than a call for international solidarity. Because when entire populations starve and are sunken into war; because when misery, disease, evil and ignorance rule, it is highly unfair to ask a country to sacrifice for the benefit of others who do not endure such famine, disease, ignorance, or misery. It is better to establish a mechanism to forgive foreign debt that would allow these countries not only to attain greater environmental protection, but also a higher level of human development for their people.

Although the developing countries have for decades borrowed money from the developed world to cover their expenses, it is also true that, on environmental matters, the developed world is in debt. It is time to settle accounts.

The fourth and last action that Peace with Nature will promote beyond our borders is actually an endorsement to the initiative proposed by the 1995 Nobel Laureate in Chemistry, Mario Molina, advocating for the creation of a carbon emission fee. I know this initiative will be difficult to attain, because it entails a considerable disbursement for countries. However, as Professor Molina affirms: *“not taking any action might imply a cost 20 or 30 times higher”*. My good friend, the former President of Harvard University, Derek Bok, who visited us precisely twenty years ago, during my first administration, once said that: *“if you think education is too costly, try ignorance”*. Likewise, if we think that Peace with Nature is too expensive, we should examine the cost of the war against nature.

In particular for those countries which, like Costa Rica, depend to a large extent on tourism, the cost of our environment's degradation is by far higher than the cost of its preservation. I have said this many times and I will repeat it as many times as necessary: if we want tourists to stay in five-star hotels in Costa Rica, we must make sure that quetzals, limpets, monkeys, and even lowland pacas, also enjoy a five-star accommodation. If we want that the engine of our economic growth continues to run, we must begin right now to power it with energy sources other than fossil fuels. And if we want to see money flow from our companies, first we need to ensure the flow of our rivers, lakes, seas and groundwater.

These are the four actions we propose in the international scene. They make up a clear and ambitious agenda, which should not intimidate

us. We have always fought for the so-called “*lost causes*”, and we have been garnering victories for almost 200 years. Costa Rica feels proud to swim against the tide and to run unshielded against the bullets of pessimism. We have already proven we can be unique in the world, and we will do so again.

It is time to act. We cannot sit and wait to see the results of collective inertia, as though we were spectators of a Shakespearian tragedy. We cannot wait for all countries to sign the Kyoto Protocol; we cannot wait for them to decide on what to do *after* the Kyoto Protocol; we cannot wait for their scientists to devise miracle solutions; we cannot wait for their carbon plants to stop releasing gases to the atmosphere; we cannot wait for them to invest in public transformation or to drastically increase the efficiency of their fuels. We cannot wait for the rest of the world to act because, although we have not run out of options yet, we have certainly run out of time.

I began my speech by remembering the first poem of our Western literature. A poem of war. But the last poem of the planet has not been written yet. Nobody may call themselves a historian of the end of our species, nobody can be a chronicler of our last days. There is still some ink left in our pens, and we must decide what to write with it: will we describe a desert scenery, where death has been crowned queen; or will we describe life, water, air and sap? We must decide whether to write a last poem of war or to, finally, write the poem of our Peace with Nature.

SAVING THE PLANET IS CHEAPER THAN DEVASTATING IT

SUMMIT ON CLIMATE CHANGE
UNITED NATIONS, NEW YORK
22 SEPTEMBER 2009

“The good news is that saving the planet is cheaper than devastating it. What is more, solving the problem of global warming and preserving life would only cost a fraction of what we spend each year on the business of death.”

I feel that the privilege of speaking out at this summit was not granted to me as an individual, but to the hundreds of middle-income countries that deserve an audible voice in the conclave that is on the edge of the planet's precipice. Each of us in this room represents the silent presence of hundreds of millions of human beings, who together form a prodigious species in the last crag of their survival. A species that is asking us to have the courage, the elemental courage, of choosing life above any disagreement.

I have not come here to point fingers or to blame anyone. First of all, because I am aware that we are the heirs to the mistakes that others have committed in the past. And, secondly, because I believe that if we are going to build, together, a possible destiny for humanity, we will have to abandon the painful practice of avoiding responsibility through the game of excuses and recriminations. I hope that the nations that have contributed the most to creating this state of affairs, and that have derived the most benefit from unsustainable development, also have the nobility of being today the most willing nations to correct the direction and lend a helping hand.

The dilemma we face is dramatically simple: developed countries can do a lot to reduce their carbon emissions, but it will not be enough; poor countries can do something, but it will not be significant; and middle-income nations can do sufficient, but without cheap and clean energy they will affect the growth rate of their economies. This global

political tie takes us straight to the cliff. We need to do more, and especially, we need to do it faster. We do not have twenty, forty or sixty years to dramatically change things. We have, at the most, eight years.

During this time, we must devise the way to bring the price of renewable energies to an accessible level for developing nations. We should substantially improve the efficiency of our present energy consumption. We should urgently preserve the forests that are being destroyed, declaring protected areas, compensating private forest owners, and scaling up mechanisms such as the Program to Reduce Carbon Emissions, caused by Deforestation and Forest Degradation (the REDD+ initiative of the United Nations). We should design ways for the mass transfer of information and technology, ensuring that the successful experience in one corner of the world is the categorical imperative in the other. We should forge creative and strong alliances between the public and private sectors, which allow us to make environmental conservation an asset and not an expense for our companies, something that Costa Rica has done successfully.

We should invest in adapting to climate change, particularly in developing countries which, due to their geographic exposure, low incomes, greater dependence on agriculture and weak infrastructure, suffer more as a result of droughts, hurricanes and floods that have worsened in the past years. And lastly, and most importantly, we must significantly increase international cooperation. Last year, member countries of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) allocated \$120 billion to international aid for development, less than half of what they are required to provide under with the international agreements signed. This aid has moreover been erratic, casuistic and deprived of priorities and strategic thinking. We should build an international platform against global warming, allowing us to rapidly channel the aid, information and technology from one country to another. And even if all this is onerous, we should do it immediately.

The good news is that saving the planet is cheaper than devastating it. What is more, solving the problem of global warming and preserving life would only cost a fraction of what we spend each year on the business of death. With just a percentage of the \$13 trillion that, at a minimum, will be allocated to military spending in the next 10 years, we could cover the full cost of stabilizing greenhouse gas emissions in the world. The most shameless general could say that the insane arms

race constitutes a reserve for future emergencies. Today, I want to tell you that the emergency is already with us. The world has a savings account in military spending that should be used to save our species against an enemy that is real. And it can do so without giving up the security of its armies, the need which I do not share but I understand. It is about correcting the excesses on one part, to address the deficiencies on the other part, because it will not do us any good to have nuclear submarines when the ocean is a burning pile, with helicopter gunships when the sky becomes a black cloud, or with missiles that will target nothing but cockroaches in the desert. Today, we are called to change radically.

We must rethink the way we live, the way we develop, and like the conqueror Hernán Cortés, get rid of the ships that brought us here. There is little time left for Copenhagen. No leader should seek shelter in details as a mechanism to avoid compromise. The broad features of our new history are outlined. We will have to see if we are courageous enough, have the essential courage, to choose life and start over.

A PEACE WITH ALL FORMS OF LIFE

ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES
WASHINGTON, UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
23 SEPTEMBER 2008

"I trust that it is no coincidence that this Forum is being inaugurated by an inhabitant of the first nation in history to abolish its army and declare peace to the world. If Costa Rica is a symbol of something, it is precisely that there is no destiny of violence written for us in the stars. Life based on democracy, justice and freedom, is possible for nations that dare to build it, for nations that dare to base their security on the strength of their institutions, and not on the power of their weapons."

In the famous congress of nations held by Simón Bolívar in Panama in 1826 —undeniable precedent to this Organization of American States—, the nations of the continent signed a treaty where they stated that they aspired *"to ensure themselves from now and forever the enjoyment of an unalterable peace."*

With such a marvellous promise, it is hard to understand how it was that such bloody civil wars followed and shaped the development of our modern States gambling America's destiny in the field of battle.

And it is even harder to understand how the XX Century witnessed the most inhumane trail of violence and repression in Latin America, when dictatorships dimmed hopes, and tyrants held by force the governments they acquired with weapons. Had Tolstoy had to write *War and Peace in America*, he would be still writing the memoirs of every caudillo who ever raised a flag in our land, a stage for the noblest of ideals but also for the most entrenched violence. Not even one hundred years of solitude would have been enough to count the trails of blood that carved our continent in the almost two centuries since our independence.

We were the region that came to life as a promise of peace, justice and liberty, and we are still that grand historical experiment. But it took us too long to understand that peace is more than the absence of war,

and that strengthening our democracies and the human development of our people, based on the dialogue among nations, diplomacy and international law, are the best avenues to ensure, at last, *the enjoyment of an unalterable peace*.

I trust that we have come to this Forum with that conviction. I trust that we were brought together here by the belief that organizations such as this are already a triumph of hope over fear, of tolerance over fanaticism, of reason over force. I, above all, trust that it is no coincidence that this Forum is being inaugurated by an inhabitant of the first nation in history to abolish its army and to declare peace to the world. If Costa Rica is a symbol at all, it is precisely a symbol that there is no destiny of violence foretold for us in the stars. Life based on democracy, justice and liberty, is possible for those nations that dare to pursue it, for those nations that dare to base their security on the strength of their institutions and not on the strength of their armament.

A life dedicated to the search for peace has taught me that, in fact, there is no fantasy, or naivety or idealism in it. Peace is not a dream but hard work, and it is not a path taken because it is easy but because it is necessary. The current situation in Colombia and the conflicts that have become direr in the Middle East, in Georgia and in the Sudan, demonstrate that reconciliation is a profound and difficult process, a process that requires years of work, a process that presumes adversity and demands perseverance. In order to trust in peace, it is not necessary to believe that negotiations are infallible. We know that parties are often intransigent, that leaders often do not fulfil their obligations and responsibilities, and that some may even make peace negotiations more difficult. Despite these difficulties, it is obvious that the alternative is even worse. I cannot recount the number of times that we were asked to give up in the peace process in Central America. I cannot recount the times that frustration overtook us. We stumbled and we went backwards, and we knocked on thousands of closed doors. But we did not give up. That was the difference. On the one thousandth and one try, the doors opened.

There are no sacred formulas or philosophical stones for this that we have called "*Peace in the Americas*". There are simply signs. There are actions that tend to weaken our peace, and there are actions that tend to strengthen it. Human development and democracy strengthen peace; the accumulation of arms and public insecurity weaken it.

You may say that these things are obvious, but I do not know how obvious they are when, last year, our continent spent \$598 billion dollars in troops and armament, of which \$39.6 billion were spent by Latin America, a region that, except for Colombia, is not engaged in any armed conflict. With the money that Latin America spends in its armies in one year, we could pay for universal elementary education around the world and have money left over; we could meet all the Millennium Development Goals in terms of health and environment; or we could provide eight million credits for affordable housing. But even if we accept the fact that Latin American nations cannot eliminate with one swift stroke their military spending, it is clear that there are certain expenditures that could be reduced gradually and progressively. If, for example, we didn't invest in one F-16 jet fighter, whose cost hovers around \$80 million dollars –and there are tens of them in our region –, we would have enough money to provide a \$100 dollar-a-month scholarship to 5,500 Latin American children and adolescents, from kindergarten until they graduate from high school; it would be enough money to increase the salaries of 8,000 Latin American teachers by \$1,000 dollars a year for the next ten years. One single plane cannot make that much difference in terms of security, but how different our region would be with thousands of more students!

There is, at the end of all this, a moral question. The developed nations and the international financial organizations cannot reward with economic resources and foreign debt forgiveness those nations that choose to arm their troops rather than educate their children. If we are to begin a serious and responsible debate about establishing a lasting peace in the Americas, we must begin by showing the developing nations, whether they are poor or middle-income nations, that the international community knows the difference between those who invest in life and those who invest in death, between those who aim for higher human development and those who are satisfied with higher military development.

It is for this reason that my government has introduced the Costa Rica Consensus (*Refer to speech "A future at the scale of our dreams", 19/09/2006*). I am convinced that it will bring us more security and peace than all the money that we currently dedicate to our armies. And I am convinced of it for a simple reason: for many years now peace in Latin America has been, above all, a domestic matter. Our insecurity

does not come, for the most part, from foreign countries or enemy armies but from the street warfare waged in our neighbourhoods and in our cities. Not long ago the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) informed us that Latin America spends 14% of its Gross Domestic Product to combat citizen insecurity, an expenditure that must certainly be a serious obstacle to achieving higher development. Our region must dedicate resources to combat delinquency, but, above all, it must dedicate those resources to combat the causes of delinquency.

Those causes are fought with more schools, more clinics and hospitals, more housing and recreations centres, more cultural activities and sports. But they are also fought by stemming the proliferation of small arms and light weapons that constitute the driving force of our public insecurity. 42% of the homicides committed with firearms around the world are committed in Latin America where only 8% of the world population lives. We, more than anyone else, are interested in supporting a project that Costa Rica has introduced in the United Nations, The Arms Trade Treaty (*Refer to speech "A future at the scale of our dreams", 19/09/2006*). Neither terrorist groups, nor drug trafficking cartels, nor street gangs would have any power without the power of their firearms. It is clear that approving this Treaty will not make those groups disappear, but that is no reason to make matters easier for them.

The last topic I wanted to talk to you about also has to do with peace although, often, we do not understand it. More than a few scientists have predicted that the wars of the future will not be about controlling territory or wealth but about access to natural resources. It could be that tomorrow, drinking water would generate more conflicts than oil. There is no war deadlier than the war for survival when facing scarce resources; and although the world has not reached that point yet, that time will come if we don't do something to prevent it.

More than five hundred years ago, Christopher Columbus described America in these terms: *"Its lands are high; there are in it many sierras and very lofty mountains, ... and are filled with trees of a thousand kinds and tall, so that they seem to touch the sky. I am told that they never lose their foliage, and this I can believe, for I saw them as green and lovely as they are in Spain in May, and some of them were flowering, some bearing fruit, and some at another stage, according to their nature. The nightingale was singing and other birds of a thousand*

kinds, in the month of November, there where I went.” That image that Columbus had gets blurrier each day with the trees we cut down, with the carbon dioxide that we emit, and with the rivers and oceans that we contaminate. Even though it is considered Earth’s Eden, so far in the XXI Century Latin America has been responsible for two thirds of the loss of all forest cover. Today more than ever, Peace in the Americas depends on our ability to declare Peace with Nature (*Refer to speech “We will not renounce life in the planet”, 10/07/2007*).

The process of enlightenment of the best ideals of humanity is not immune from the pains of birth. Perhaps the suffering from all the wars our continent has witnessed is the price we have paid to understand certain things. The utopia of America, of which this organization is its most visible symbol, has been strengthened by the lessons of our history, by the experiences that, in the end, have taught us that one does not achieve peace through arms or war, death or hate, nor through forgetfulness or indifference. Peace is achieved by placing human beings at the centre. Peace is achieved by defending life. Peace is achieved by investing in our people and not in our armies; exchanging ideas and not weapons; preserving forests not biases.

I hope that this Forum will understand these principles, and will be able to take humanity a step closer to that future that Rafael Alberti described in these words:

“Peace in all abodes. Peace on earth, in the sky, under the sea, over the seas. Peace on the extended height of the tablecloth, peace on the table without the frown of food. In birds, in flowers, in fish, in the open furrows of labour. Peace at dawn, in sleep. Peace in the passion of the adult and the illusion of the young. Peace with no end, true peace. Peace that will get up at daybreak and won’t die at night.”

ANNEX



Seneca rightly said that “There are never favorable winds for those who do not know where they are going to”. I am convinced that Costa Rica has everything it needs to reach its goals, but first it needs to know where it wants to head to.



With my children, Sylvia Eugenia, and Oscar Felipe, at home in Costa Rica.



Besides the portrait of my mother, Lillyan Sanchez, at my home's library.



In Geneva, at the meeting where Willy Brandt, former Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany was elected President of the International Socialist (IS). I managed to get Costa Rican president Oduber elected as one of its Vice-Presidents. In the second row behind me is Willy Brandt, and in the third row is Isaac Rabin, Prime Minister of Israel.

With James Callaghan, British Prime Minister at No.10 Downing Street, in London. As then Minister of National Planning and Economic Policy, I accompanied Costa Rican President, Daniel Oduber and his Minister of Foreign Affairs, Gonzalo Facio, on a State visit to the United Kingdom. Years later, after my first Presidential term, I fully realized the value of James Callaghan's leadership at the debates of the InterAction Council, of which he was a member until his passing.



With Issac Shamir, Prime Minister of Israel, at my residency. A Prime Minister who, for his experience, knew like no other the pain that war causes.



With the Presidents of Central America, Daniel Ortega of Nicaragua; José Azcona, of Honduras; Marco Vinicio Cerezo, of Guatemala, and José Napoleón Duarte, of El Salvador; at the Convent of Esquipulas, Guatemala. This was the first time when the five Central American Presidents met among us. In that meeting, I was impressed by the antagonism that prevailed between President Ortega, on the one hand, and Presidents Duarte and Azcona on the other hand.





With Daniel Oduber, former President of my country, Felipe González, President of the Spanish Government and Carlos Andrés Pérez, President of Venezuela. Both Daniel and I wanted that both Felipe as Carlos Andrés pressured the Sandinista government to sign the Arias Peace Plan.

With Carlos Andrés Pérez, President of Venezuela, Felipe González, Government President of Spain, Daniel Ortega, President of Nicaragua, and Rafael Leonardo Callejas, President of Honduras, in the plane of the Government of Spain. The five Presidents travelled together to the inauguration of President Patricio Aylwin, President of Chile, democratically elected after the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet.



Against all predictions and the will of two superpowers, the Presidents Daniel Ortega of Nicaragua, José Napoleón Duarte of El Salvador, Marco Vinicio Cerezo of Guatemala, José Azcona of Honduras, and myself, signed the Peace Plan presented by my government. That day, August 7, 1987, in Guatemala City we signed an instrument to change the history of Central America.



With Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, Secretary-General of the United Nations, José Sarney, President of Brazil and Mario Soares, President of Portugal in New York. All expressed their support to our efforts to bring peace to Central America.

My first visit to the United Nations, where I delivered an address about the values of my country and where I declared that “in Nicaragua Sandino has been killed one more time.” I also declared that the Nicaraguan “contras” was part of the problem and not the solution for the regional conflicts.



With Ronald Reagan, President of the United States, George Shultz, U.S. Secretary of State and Rodrigo Madrigal Nieto, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Costa Rica at the White House. I told President Reagan that continuing the Central American military conflict meant that the superpowers provided the weapons, and the Central American people provided the dead.



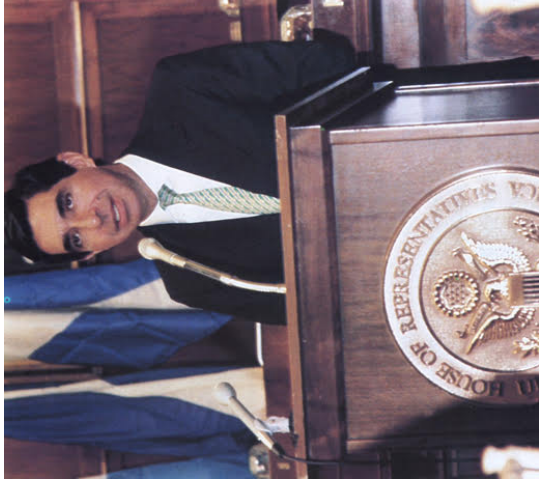
With Ronald Reagan, President of the United States, at the Oval Office of the White House. I was accompanied by Rodrigo Madrigal Nieto, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Costa Rica; Guido Fernández, Costa Rican Ambassador in Washington, Fernando Volio, President of the Costa Rican Legislative Assembly, and my advisor John Biehl. President Reagan was accompanied by Frank Carlucci, Chief of the National Security Office, Elliot Abrams, adjunct Secretary for Inter-American affairs, José Sorzano, President Reagan's advisor for Latin American affairs; Howard Baker, Chief of Cabinet; John Whitehead, Deputy Secretary of State and George H. Bush, Vice President. I expressed to President Reagan and his team that I wanted to keep Costa Rica away from the Central American military conflicts, and that only democracy can guarantee the reconciliation among peoples.



Lunch offered by Ronald Reagan, President of the United States, during my visit to the White House. I was joined by Rosemary Karpinski, President of the Costa Rican Legislative Assembly; Rodrigo Arias, Costa Rican Minister of the Presidency; Rodrigo Madrigal, Costa Rican Minister of Foreign Affairs; Guido Fernandez, Costa Rican Ambassador in Washington, and Fernando Naranjo, Costa Rican Minister of Finance. During that lunch I told them: "Only if we foster democracy for all peoples, only if we equally encourage the fall of every tyrant, we will be able to prevent the growth in the Americas of peace threats to the rest of the world."



With Ronald Reagan, President of the United States in one of my various visits to the White House. In his book ‘The peace challenge in Central America,’ Guido Fernandez states that “the mere presence of Arias that morning at the White House, made him the President who had met more frequently with Reagan in the shortest time -nine months- and perhaps the only one who had dared to contradict him at his own house.”



The day that I delivered my speech at the United States Congress when I asked both members of the American Congress and the Senate to give peace a chance in Central America.

With Senator John Kerry, at the Presidential House in San Jose. From the beginning he was an enthusiastic supporter of the Arias Peace Plan for Central America.



With Senator Edward Kennedy in Washington D.C. From the very beginning he also embraced the Arias Peace plan as means for a negotiated solution for the Central American conflict.

With Francois Mitterrand, President of France. President Mitterrand and I had met when, before I was President, he visited Costa Rica and I was Secretary of International Affairs of the National Liberation Party of Costa Rica. I recall that after finishing dinner with President Mitterrand, I went to see the room at the Hotel d'Alsace where Oscar Wilde passed away, one of my favorite writers.



With Jacques Chirac, Prime Minister of France, in Paris. I expressed to the Prime Minister my gratitude for his support for the Arias Peace Plan.



With Margarita Penón, the King of Spain, Juan Carlos I, and Queen Sofía, at the Royal Palace in Madrid.



With Felipe González, President of Government of Spain, in the Royal Palace of El Pardo, Madrid. Felipe was a loyal friend and enthusiastic advocate for the Arias Peace Plan

With Helmut Kohl, Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, in Bonn. I explained to him my peace proposal based on reason, respect, and understanding among nations, rather than alternatives based on the use of force. I immediately had his support.



With Richard von Weizsäcker, President of the Federal Republic of Germany, in Bonn. I thanked the President for his support to the Arias Peace Plan. I could not expect less of a nation that experienced and suffered dictatorship and war, and that deeply understands the value of peace.

With Margarita Penón, her British Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh at Buckingham Palace. I told them that with the Arias Peace Plan, Costa Ricans were stressing their unbreakable faith in the search for diplomatic solutions to settle disputes among States.



With Margaret Thatcher, British Prime Minister at No.10 Downing Street, London. I asked the Prime Minister for her support to reach a peaceful solution to the Central American conflicts. The Prime Minister did not trust the Sandinistas, nevertheless, she also supported the Arias Peace Plan.

With Mother Theresa of Calcutta, in San Jose, Costa Rica. Mother Theresa came to express her concern for the well-being of our little country, and to join the Costa Rican pacific army.



With Pope John Paul II at the Vatican. When I met with the Pope, I experienced a deep emotion. This holy man offered me his support in my effort to convince the world that it was possible to reach peace in Central America.

With the Dalai Lama. In the name of women and men of good will of my country, I greeted his holiness, messenger of peace and preacher of tolerance and compassion.



As keynote speaker at Harvard University graduation ceremony. That time I told students about my people and explained them that I belong to small country which never feared to abolish its army to become stronger. Behind, at right, John Kenneth Galbraith, the great North American economist.

With Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, Secretary-General of the United Nations and Elie Weisel, Nobel Peace Prize 1986 in New York. Elie Wiesel hosted a dinner in my honor before my departure to Oslo to receive the Nobel Peace Prize in 1987.



In Oslo, the day I received the Nobel Peace Prize. In the Great Hall of the University of Oslo I stated: "When you decided to honor me with this prize, you decided to honor a country of peace, you decided to honor Costa Rica... this prize is a signal to let the world know that you want to promote the Central American peace plan. I hereby tell his Royal Highness, to the honorable members of the Nobel Peace Prize Committee and to the wonderful people of Norway, that I accept this prize because I know how passionately you share our will to success in our search for peace. If in the coming years peace prevails and violence and war cease, part of that peace will be owed to the faith of the Norwegian people forever."



I show to my children Oscar Felipe and Sylvia Eugenia the diploma of the Nobel Peace Prize, while my mother, Lillyan Sanchez, observes the medal. In my speech I said: "To receive the Nobel Peace Prize on December 10 is a wonderful coincidence for me. My son, Oscar Felipe, present here with us, celebrates his 8th birthday. I tell him, and through him to all children of my country that we should never invoke violence, that we should never support military solutions for the Central American problems. For sake of the new generations today we must understand, more than ever, that peace can only be reached through its own instruments: dialogue and understanding, tolerance and forgiveness, freedom and democracy".





At the Great Hall of the University of Oslo, after receiving the Nobel Peace Prize. A told all guests: "... we will not give up to dream, we will not fear wisdom, we will not run away from freedom. I always tell poets that in Central America we will not forget Don Quixote, we will not quit to life, we will not give our backs to our souls, and we will never lose our faith in God... I receive this prize as one of the five Presidents who have committed before the whole world the will of their peoples to change a history of oppression for a future of freedom; to change a history of hunger for a destination of progress; to change the tears of mothers and violent death of youngsters for hope; for a path of peace that we wish to walk together. I am one of those five men who signed an agreement, a commitment consisting, in great part, in wishing peace with all our souls."

With King Olav V of Norway, after receiving the Nobel Peace Prize. The King hosted all my family at the Royal Palace. For his birthday, the King gave my son as present a Viking ship.



With Willy Brandt, former Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany and President of the Socialist International, in Oslo. I had known Willy Brandt since my years when I was the Secretary General of the National Liberation Party of Costa Rica, and since then, we had a deep friendship. For me it was a great surprise finding him at the Great Hall of the University of Oslo when I received the Nobel Peace Prize.”



With his Royal Highness, Prince Felipe de Borbón, when receiving the Prize Prince of Asturias for International Cooperation. I told his Highness that peace does not start with the other, but rather within each one of us. The route to peace is long, but I trust that with the dawn of a new day in the future, we will hear someone shouting Peace! Like more than 500 years ago someone shouted in the Caribbean “Land at sight!”



With Presidents José Azcona of Honduras, Rodrigo Borja of Ecuador, A.N.R. Robinson of Trinidad and Tobago, Hugh Desmond Hoyte of Guyana, Julio Maria Sanguinetti of Uruguay, Brian Mulroney of Canada, George Price of Belize, Carlos Andres Pérez of Venezuela, José Sarney of Brazil, Alfredo Cristiani of El Salvador, Daniel Ortega of Nicaragua, Carlos Saúl Menem of Argentina, and George H. Bush of the United States, during the Summit of Presidents of the Western Hemisphere. I told to all those Presidents: “Welcome to Costa Rica, a land without weapons which does not know oppression. Thanks for being here when we proudly celebrate 100 years of democracy.”



With Brian Mulroney, Prime Minister of Canada, Julio Maria Sanguinetti, President of Uruguay and Carlos Menem, President of Argentina in San Jose, Costa Rica. That day, when we inaugurated the Democracy Plaza, I stated: "In this plaza that we open today, children will sing, and poets will read their poems. Painters will exhibit their art and students will play. Senior citizens will relax and couples in love will kiss. We have come here today to inaugurate a plaza that in its first day is celebrating one hundred years."



Julio Maria Sanguinetti, President of Uruguay, delivered the toast for the 100 years of democracy in Costa Rica and said: "Twenty five centuries ago, when the Greeks were fighting the Persians, and Athens and Sparta joined forces against the latter, one day on board of the ship commanded by Themistocles –the famous Themistocles—Lacedaemonian, colleague of the latter told him "Today there is no democracy in Athens, because all Athenian men are away from Athens and are here in these ships". And Themistocles replied: "You are wrong. We Athenians carry freedom within ourselves, you cannot separate an Athenian from freedom. Wherever there is an Athenian there is freedom, regardless of where they may be." Today I say, wherever there is a Costa Rican, regardless of where they may be, there is freedom. For such spirit, for that idea, for this wonder that only could be done by Costa Rica, let's raise our glasses and toast: Cheers to Costa Rica! Cheers to Freedom!



With Fidel Castro, President of Cuba, to whom I requested his support for the Arias Peace Plan.

With U.S. President Jimmy Carter, who visited me to express his support and solidarity for a peaceful and negotiated solution to the Central American conflicts.





With President Daniel Ortega of Nicaragua, discussing the implementation of the Arias Peace Plan after the signing, at the Presidential House in San Jose, Costa Rica



With the pop stars Sting, Bruce Springsteen, Tracy Chapman and Peter Gabriel who delivered a concert for Human Rights in San Jose, Costa Rica. My daughter Sylvia Eugenia accompanied me at the Presidential House.

With George H. Bush President of the United States, in the Oval Office at the White House, I told him that after the signing of the Arias Peace Plan new trends started to shape the regional political scenario: Central American nations started to engage in dialogue with their Presidents, their Ministers and their technocrats, warriors in El Salvador and the government had re-started their dialogue, and national reconciliation commissions had been established.



With Violeta Barrios de Chamorro, President of Nicaragua, in San José, Costa Rica. When political leaders of many countries asked me if I thought it was realistic to expect that a Marxist government would allow free elections, my answer always was that there is always a first time. The Arias Peace Plan mandated free elections for all Central American countries, and that was precisely what was achieved in Nicaragua. Mrs. Violeta was charged to undertake the difficult task to reconcile the Nicaraguan family.



With Helmut Schmidt, former Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany. One of the greatest statements I ever met. With him I shared many unforgettable moments.



With Mikhail Gorbachev. Years before the signing of the Arias Peace Plan, I wrote a public letter to President Gorbachev asking him to stop sending weapons to Central America, as such policy was preventing our aspiration to find a negotiated solution to the military conflicts in the region.



With Nobel Peace Prize Laureates,
Bishop Desmond Tutu, Yasser
Arafat, Shimon Peres, Mikhail
Gorbachev, and F.W. de Klerk, in
Ramallah, CIS Jordan



With Luis Ignacio Lula da Silva,
President of Brazil, in Costa Rica.
It was a pleasure to host one of
the warmest and more popular
Presidents in Latin America.

With George W. Bush, President of the United States, at the White House. With President Bush I discussed the need to encourage nations to reduce their military spending, particularly in those regions where financial resources are scarce. I explained to him the initiative that my government during my second term advocated worldwide: the “Consensus of Costa Rica”, an initiative to promote debt relief and financial support those developing countries willing to increasingly invest in environmental protection, education, health, and housing for their people, and increasingly reduce spending in arms and soldiers. This is an idea for which we are still struggling.



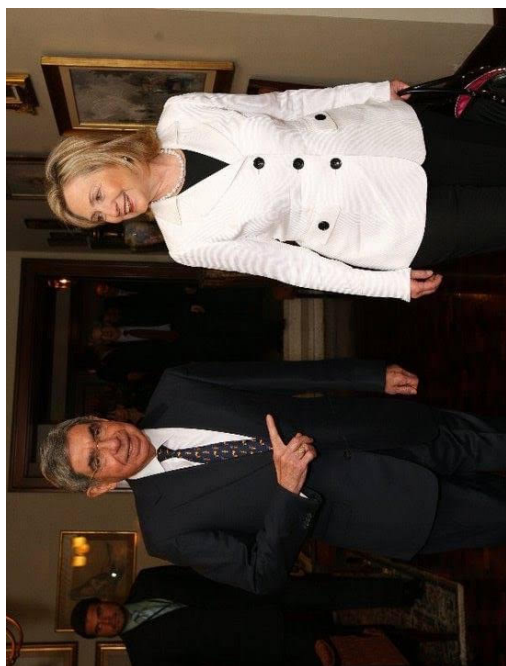
With Hu Jintao, President of the People's Republic of China. I told him that “I come from a small country, where all the territory of Costa Rica is only three times bigger than Beijing. I come from a courageous and decided country, a country which is also loyal and solidary, a country where its people dare to dream and pursue their ideals. I come from the first country in the world which opted to voluntarily dismantle its armed forces. I come from the first Central American country which has established diplomatic ties with the People's Republic of China.

With Bill Clinton, President of the United States, and Kerry Kennedy (Robert Kennedy's daughter) with whom I discussed the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), an initiative born at the Arias Foundation for Peace and Human Development, which was successfully approved by the United Nations, and came into force in 2014. No other government in the history of Costa Rica has submitted a text of such international relevance to reduce violence and to mitigate poverty, as it has been demonstrated that military spending undermines the prospects for development in the poorer nations of our planet.



With Barack Obama, President of the United States in the Western Hemisphere Summit in Trinidad, and Tobago. There I commented that every time that Caribbean and Latin American countries meet with the President of the United States is to either ask favors or present complaints. Almost always it is to blame that country of our own past, present, and future mistakes. I do not think that is completely fair. We have had the opportunity to board the train to development, and many times, repeatedly, we have let it pass by.





With Hillary Clinton, U.S. Secretary of State at my home. I told her that to talk about trade integration continues to be difficult in many parts of the Americas, still protected by old and obsolete ideological walls. It is very picturesque hearing discussions in our region as to whether Latin America should favor trade integration. One cannot consider economic integration in our world as a choice. It is a factual reality, and it must be recognized as such. Globalization is a force, not a decision, and incidentally, it is a force that is also beneficial.



With Angela Merkel, Chancellor of Germany, in Berlin. Costa Rica shares with Germany our aspiration to eradicate human misery, the attachment to democracy and the love for freedom.

With Jose Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, President of Government of Spain in Madrid. Spain played a key role supporting the conclusion of the Association Agreement between the European Union and Central America, a key instrument to diversify trade and investment flows with Central American countries.



With Pope Benedict XVI at the Vatican. To his Holiness I expressed that the Catholic Church should be a facilitator and not a hurdle for the control of the demographic explosion in most developing countries, a factor that significantly affects the efforts for poverty reduction.



With Juan Carlos I, King of Spain, Queen Sofia, and H.R.H. the Princes of Asturias, Felipe and Letizia de Borbón, -current King and Queen of Spain- at the Royal Palace in Madrid, during my second administration.



With Abdullah Güll, President of the Republic of Turkey, in Ankara. A visit to a great nation, which plays a key role for the search of peace in the Middle East.



With Mahmud Abbas, President of the Palestine Authority. I told him that peace is possible, even if it is incredibly difficult to reach. Peace is possible even if a thousand attempts to reach it fail, one will one day succeed.



With Shimon Peres, President of Israel, in Jerusalem. Our paths have crossed each other many times along our lives. Some of Shimon Peres' most noble dreams and visions for peace in the Middle East are yet to become a reality. But I am sure such dreams still are alive in the hearts of many.



With Benjamin Netanyahu, Prime Minister of Israel, in Jerusalem. I insisted to the Prime Minister that it is urgent to return to the negotiation table and strive for a deadline to conclude peace negotiations between Israel and Palestine. More than 60 years have passed since the United Nations General Assembly decided to call for the establishment of a Palestinian State.... and we keep waiting for peace. More than a decade has passed since the Oslo Agreements... and we keep waiting or peace. Critical issues such as the status of Jerusalem, the thousands of refugees and the expansion of new settlements have remained relegated.... and we keep waiting for peace.

Chatting with school students while I was waiting for the arrival of Hu Jintao, the President of the People's Republic of China, at the Presidential House in San Jose, Costa Rica. I appeared together with the presidents of the other Branches of Costa Rican government and the members of my cabinet.



With the Costa Rican army: young students at school.



With Vice President Joe Biden, during my second administration at the Presidential House in Costa Rica, where we discussed the challenges behind the immigration of Central Americans into the United States.



With Barack and Michelle Obama, in Washington D.C. together with my daughter Sylvia Eugenia.

With Pope Francis at the Vatican together with my wife, Suzanne.



Arriving at the National Theater in San Jose, Costa Rica, together with my wife Suzanne and my daughter, Sylvia Eugenia to host the gala in honor of the Heads of State and other personalities visiting the country at the conclusion of my second administration.

Welcome remarks at the gala dinner at the conclusion of my second administration with H.R.H Prince Felipe of Spain, Felipe Calderon, President of Mexico and Mrs. Calderon, together with my wife Suzanne.



Walking towards the national stadium together with my wife Suzanne and my children Sylvia Eugenia and Oscar Felipe at the conclusion of my second administration and transfer the presidential authority to the newly elected President, Laura Chinchilla, the first woman been elected to that office and who was my Vice President during my second administration.

With my wife Suzanne at the
Taj Mahal in Agra, India.



With my wife Suzanne at the
Great Wall of China.



Celebrating the success of our national football
soccer team with a group of fans, outside the
national stadium in San Jose, Costa Rica.



Suzanne and I cheering up our national football soccer team at the national stadium with President Carlos Alvarado of Costa Rica, Claudia Dobles, the first Lady and the President of the Costa Rican soccer association, Rodolfo Villalobos.

With my wife Suzanne, enjoying life as private citizens.



Images in this book are courtesy of the Author

THE POWER OF IDEAS

Reflections on Peace, Development and Governance

Today, the need for international cooperation to win peace is as pressing as never before. Technology and globalization have brought societies in geographically distant continents closer together. Increasing economic, social, and environmental interaction entail higher risks of political friction, and thus, greater risks for international conflict. And yet, paradoxically, in the beginning of the second decade of the XXI century, we are witnessing new wars and how the international institutions which are instrumental to enable nation States to win peace among themselves are being gradually strangled by increasing nationalistic pressures.

It is within this context, that the Institute of Malaysian and International Studies of the National University of Malaysia (IKMAS) is publishing this book. This publication is a compilation of a set of essays and key-note speeches by Dr. Oscar Arias Sánchez, former President of Costa Rica for two times and Nobel Peace Laureate. During his first term as President, he was the architect of the Arias Peace Plan that made it possible to end the civil wars in Central America. He devoted himself so passionately to peace that he was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1987. During his second administration between 2006 and 2010, to highlight one of his many achievements, he convinced the people of Costa Rica to ratify the Free Trade Agreement with the United States by referendum. Together with the Association Agreement with the European Union also negotiated during his second term, these free trade agreements advocated by President Arias have contributed to allow Costa Rica to migrate from being a commodity exporter to become a supplier of high-tech manufacturing and sophisticated services exports.

The ideas expressed by Oscar Arias in his essays gravitate around the topics of democracy, peace and disarmament, and the importance of trade for growth and sustainable development. This book purports to serve as a bridge between the ideas and experiences of Latin America and South East Asia, with a view to foster greater dialogue, debate, and peer learning among the academic and civil society of both regions with respect to key contemporary issues. More than ever, the existing challenges of today entail the need for academia and policy makers to assume their responsibility in contributing to win the peace of a world increasingly prone to conflict.



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The Power of Ideas