



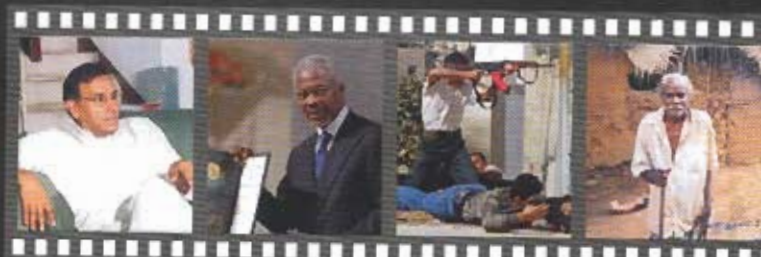
THE WORLD T

COVER SUPPLEMENT

PEACE, POLITICS, AND DIPLOMACY

An international civil servant and experienced negotiator returned to his native shores recently, with little fanfare. **LMD** talked to the Former UN Undersecretary-General for Disarmament Affairs on a host of issues – beginning at home, spanning the globe, and returning to Sri Lanka's prospects for the top job at the UN.

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STATE OF THE WORLD

101 Jayantha Dhanapala discusses global affairs and home politics with **Wijith DeChickera**.

ROAD MAP TO PROGRESS

112 Excerpts of a speech on IT made by the diplomat at a recent ICT Convocation.

THE WORLD, THE UN, AND US

117 Darshana Abayasingha reports on an exclusive **BENCHMARK** interview.

SOUL OF A DIPLOMAT

121 Savithri Rodrigo profiles the ex-ambassador on home ground.

JAYANTHA DHANAPALA

121 Education and career highlights of an international civil servant.

COVER SUPPLEMENT



ODAY

Ex-ambassador **Jayantha Dhanapala** on peace, politics and diplomacy: consensus and bridge-building is the way forward, he says, in an **EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW**.

STATE OF THE WORLD



"I am not a politician... I am not an economist," says ex-ambassador **Jayantha Dhanapala** diplomatically, discussing the gamut of global affairs in an exclusive interview with **Wijith DeChickera**.

Q: If we may start at home... Key financial institutions have told the LTTE, particularly, that the setting up of the Interim Administration should be expedited. On the other hand, the opposition has expressed dissatisfaction about the way the conflict is being resolved. The government appears to be hamstrung, caught between a rock and a hard place. What is the way forward?

A: Well, first I'd like to acknowledge my own ignorance of the details of the peace process – because I have returned to Sri Lanka after an extended absence abroad. It does appear presumptuous of me to talk about the situation. But I think, clearly, in the face of these different approaches – to the interim administration in particular and the peace process in general – there has to be, as I have said before, a greater understanding between the opposition and the government. It is incumbent on the government and the parties in power to approach the opposition, to explain the problems and the pressures under which it is, and develop a consensus – *before* they negotiate with the LTTE. And clearly, that consensus is vital before they do anything. There are pressures from the international community that we do not ipso facto have to cave into; we have to adapt those demands or requests to the actual needs of Sri Lanka and the actual needs of the country. And the government and the opposition must come to an understanding about that, of course with strong inputs from civil society. It is possible for both the opposition and the government to have their 'ear to the ground' as far as what is being thought about goes. From what I can gather in the last three months or so, there is a strong groundswell of support for the peace process – and I think it will be extremely regressive and almost suicidal if there is an effort on the part of any political party to try to disrupt the peace process...

Q: You mentioned several players: the government, the opposition, the donor

MEDIA SERVICES PHOTOFILE ISALIYA SIRISENA



"I think it will be extremely regressive and almost suicidal if there is an effort on the part of any political party to try to disrupt the peace process..."

agencies. One player that has often been an active component of a negotiated settlement is the private sector. But you recently told BENCHMARK in an interview that it was important to distinguish between the political parties and other players, when the question was posed to you whether an MOU of sorts could be struck up between these players – all the stakehold-

ers in the peace process – such that, although you may not be able to hold it up in a court of law, you could tie in those with a vested interest in the process into the inevitability of the process through a road map...

A: Well, first of all I'll make a distinction between political parties and other players; because political parties either enjoy power or seek power. Political power makes the fundamental difference, because they are the

STATE OF THE WORLD



policy-makers and the implementers of those policies. But they have to do it in cooperation with other players. But when you are in the seat of government, you are in a powerful position – whether you are in Sri Lanka or the United Kingdom or India or China. The government and the opposition – which is the party that hopes to come into the seat of power – wield considerable influence; and politicians *do* have that advantage over all the rest. But at the same time, an intelligent politician must realise the importance of working with others.

I am not entirely enamoured of the idea of a Memorandum of Understanding or a formal agreement. I don't think that compacts or social contracts actually require formalised legal documents to implement what is commonly accepted as a consensus. I think if there is to be an understanding, we can arrive at that understanding through a conference, through an attempt to establish a consensus around the table, among the private sector and political parties of different hues, in order to achieve a consensus – and based on that consensus, courses of action could be taken which will then enjoy the support of society at large. Now, even if you have a memorandum of understanding, what are the penalties if you have some transgression of an element of the same? It is just that it will be exposed in the press – and then it will be business as usual. As it is, we are finding that the ceasefire agreement is being violated – or allegedly being violated – and the monitors can do nothing about it. And this is a far more serious issue than a memorandum of understanding.

So forgive me for being a little sceptical about the MOU idea... What we *do* need is a national consensus on certain fundamental issues. I think we have developed a national consensus thanks to the late President J. R. Jayewardene – frankly whom I do not always praise – on the issue of having a deregulated economy. At that time, it was a major move. So I think that once we establish consensus like this, it should be possible for the governance of the country to be made much easier.

Q: You mentioned national consensus; but that seems to have eluded our parties, largely due to the bipartisan polity that we have enjoyed. Now, the donor agencies are pushing for humanitarian relief; reconstruction, rehabilitation and

the resettlement of displaced people. On the other hand, political expedience alone isn't enough for the government to push through the federal model that was agreed upon, together with the LTTE, in Oslo. The government seems to be at an impasse. There seems to be a residue of goodwill on the part of the donor community. Are there concerns as to how long this goodwill may actually last, and could the window of opportunity that we have be closing fast – in the light of the somewhat stalled peace process?

A: That the peace process is seemingly stalled is clear. But we do know that the LTTE are studying proposals that they have discussed at their meeting in Paris, and I think it is wise for us to give them time. Any organisation that has adopted terrorist tactics and used violence as a means of achieving their ambitions requires time to make the transition that makes them a constructive partner in the peace-negotiating process. The LTTE is not unique; there are other situations in other countries. We have also got to be patient and we have also got to use both pressure and incentives to help the LTTE make this transition. I believe their proposals were to be presented in mid-October. If the proposals are interesting, I'm sure that the government will give its studied response. But what I would hope is that the government would share with the opposition what these proposals are, and try to agree on a common response...

Q: You mentioned political combat – and that is something that we have seen a lot of lately, especially the somewhat precarious cohabitation between the President and the Prime Minister, which has been something of a hydra-headed monster that has caused several debacles in Sri Lanka, plus some embarrassment abroad as well. What can be done to assuage the political bickering that has prevented us from reaching a consensus – not just on the peace process, but on a rash of other issues of national import? And what kind of impression could this have created on the United Nations – could it have prejudiced in any way our image overseas?

A: The difficulties arising out of a constitution, which I think is inherently flawed, are

understood internationally – because our constitutional problems are not unique. The French, for example, have had similar problems and have had two periods of cohabitation – which they have also had to manage with some difficulty. In developing countries, these difficulties that we have inherited from very unwise constitutions make it even more difficult for us to manage. We have to behave with dignity when it comes to our relations with the external world. And washing dirty linen in public is something that is – both from our cultural tradition and normal international politesse – something that we would not like to do. I don't think that there is any lessening of Sri Lanka's image abroad, as a result of these contretemps between the

President and the Prime Minister – it is understood to be part of the hurly-burly of a very rambunctious political scene, which Sri Lanka has been notorious for, for a long time. But it should not stand in the way of peace and progress in the country; if it becomes an



The international community will want to hear from [Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe] directly what progress is being made regarding the peace process – because there is a strong interest in Sri Lanka and a great fund of goodwill – and if he could brief the international community on what is being done, then I think it is of great importance. Quite apart from Sri Lankan issues, the world would be interested to hear Sri Lanka's views on other issues...

"Any organisation that has adopted terrorist tactics and used violence as a means of achieving their ambitions requires time to make the transition that makes them a constructive partner in the peace-negotiating process."

obstruction to the genuine efforts to move the country forward, then the international community could begin to sit up and take notice and be concerned, that perhaps there is something – a self-destructive gene? – which is working to our disadvantage, and that something should be done about it.

Q: A self-destructive gene... Could I ask you: the President, in September, chose not to address the special sessions on HIV/AIDS. If she had been there – let's hypothesise – what could she have said that would have made a difference to the situation in Sri Lanka, in Africa, in the world, vis-à-vis the pandemic?

A: The special sessions on HIV/AIDS was deliberately created to obtain the commitment of heads of state, of heads of government, to what the UN has identified as a very high priority on the international agenda. It was such a high priority that it was even brought into the Security Council by the

United States delegation. There is no doubt that the AIDS pandemic is one of the most serious challenges that the world is facing. Twenty million have died and there are millions that are affected by HIV/AIDS. The situation in Sri Lanka may be small in relative terms, in comparison to what is happening in Africa and what is potentially going to happen in India and in China. But we should not rest on our laurels; because given the fact that the world is so globalised and interconnected, the contagion of HIV/AIDS can spread rapidly. But be that as it may, we must also be concerned about fellow global citizens in Africa – many of whom are in the Non-Aligned Movement, and many of whom are developing nations... but also many other countries. So to speak from the position of a head of state or a head of government of Sri Lanka – together with your peers, in support of this cause, and in support of remedial action – is important. Of course, our Foreign Minister has been present and has voiced Sri

Lanka's support for what is being done – but, clearly, it was the intention of the UN Secretary-General when he extended the invitation that all countries should be represented at the highest level. Our President was not able to go – and that is unfortunate. Of course, decisions should have been taken much earlier, perhaps, on this issue...

Q: Unfortunate, as you said, that the President of the country will not represent Sri Lanka there; but the Prime Minister is to address the general assembly. What issues should he have been propounding, what should he have advocated, in your view?

A: The international community will want to hear from him directly what progress is being made regarding the peace process – because there is a strong interest in Sri Lanka and a great fund of goodwill – and if he could brief the international community on what is being done, then I think it is of great importance. Quite apart from Sri Lankan issues, I'm sure the world would be interested to hear Sri Lanka's views on other issues – both economic and political – that face the international community. Kofi Annan's traditional annual report on the work of the organisation usually provides the backdrop that most delegations use as an opportunity to focus on various issues.

Reading this and listening to what both Kofi Annan and George Bush had to say on television recently on the whole question of the pre-emptive use of force, by one country or by a group of countries – without Security Council action – is a very controversial issue. Also, what should be done for the future of Iraq and how can the UN unite on this issue – all these are matters that have been raised. Sri Lanka's views on this would be necessary. But apart from that, we have other problems – the WTO meeting in Cancun; and from all accounts, how do we see the future of the North-South dialogue on trade, on aid, on debt relief? And what are the issues that Sri Lanka would like to see addressed and what solutions Sri Lanka may have, what fresh viewpoints...

Q: You mentioned Cancun. The recent WTO talks have been variously hailed as a failure by the developed nations and as a victory by the developing nations, though it may turn out to be a Pyrrhic victory for the latter. Is there a via media view, especially if you take into consideration that the US Trade Representative said that it was not a matter of a victory or a defeat, but a 'can do' approach meeting a 'won't do' attitude?



AFRICA SERVICE PHOTO/OLIVIERO TOSCANI

STATE OF THE WORLD



A: It is common, when conferences fail, to have different points of view advanced as to why it failed; and so it is no surprise that there is this diversity of opinion on the outcome of Cancun. So how do you characterise what actually happened? In the short term, the developing countries feel that it was to their advantage not to have compromised on their position in order to have success; and that in the long term, they will gain from it. The extent to which this tactic will prove useful will depend on the extent to which the developing countries can maintain their unity, and apply pressure on the developed world to understand their predicament – particularly with regard to agricultural subsidies, which is a very serious problem for the international community. On the Singapore issues [liberalising investment, encouraging competition, monitoring government procurement, and cross-border trade facilitation]: of course, it was agreed in Doha that they would be addressed only if there was a consensus – and clearly there wasn't a consensus. And the developing countries would like to link the Singapore issues with agricultural subsidies and other concerns that they have. And this is a legitimate bargaining tactic that countries adopt. From the developing countries' point of view, this is one step backward in the hope that they will move two steps forward. But if it is characterised as being intransigent on the part of the developing countries, then that's not a helpful attitude – because developing countries also have their own interests, and they have to protect those interests.

Q: At this round of talks Europe and Japan, particularly, pushed for the four main criteria that comprise the Singapore issues – but the Group of 21, being the developing nations that were strongly opposed to these, were perhaps considered intransigent. Do you have any hope – particularly given the fact that four years ago, the Seattle round of talks collapsed on very much the same issues?

A: Trade negotiations take time – like all negotiations in the international arena: and you have to wait for that moment, that opportunity of time, for the two groups to come together – and we may have missed this opportunity in Cancun, but this does not mean that it is gone forever. There will be another opportunity for these talks to be prepared bet-

ter, for a consensus to be built up, and for more partnership dialogue to take place. If you look at the Millennium Development Goals that we all subscribed to in 2000, there was partnership for development, and the reduction of trade barriers was a cardinal element in that programme. And so we have to work towards that – there is no way around it. I don't think that agreement is going to elude us permanently.

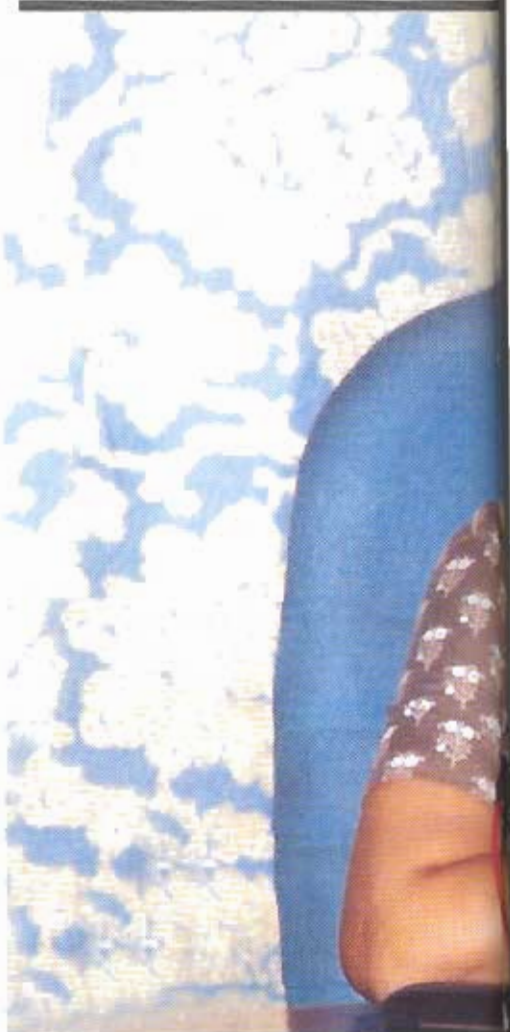
I have been too long in diplomacy to believe in the permanence of states; impermanence is very true, because we have shifting alliances and alignments, and we have situations in the world changing all the time. So what was a failure in Cancun could turn out to be a success in a year or two.

Q: In advance of the annual meetings of the IMF and the World Bank (in the fourth week of September), the Group of 24 [developing countries including Sri Lanka, India, Pakistan, Iran, Lebanon, the Philippines, and several African and Latin American countries] voiced some concerns about persistent global imbalances, the slow pace of recovery as far as the global economy is concerned, and limited progress in addressing structural issues – particularly with regard to reform. What are the concerns of the G24 countries, how legitimate are they, and what can we hope for from the First World?

A: There is no gainsaying the fact that the global economy is in a slow down. We have the three major engines of growth – the US, the EU and Japan – all registering very low growth rates. This transmits a very weak signal to the rest of the global economy. Structural reform is not only reform that has to take place in developing countries. The government of Japan has been, for over a decade, trying structural reforms in Japan itself – without much success. Focusing entirely on the developing countries is not entirely correct: we have to look at the global situation, and there are a number of reasons for the current slow down – and 9/11 is one... You can't lay the onus entirely on the developing countries and say that the problem of structural reform is their problem, which is impeding the growth of the global economy. There are a host of issues: the impact of 9/11, the impact of the corporate failures and corruption in the United States, the impact of the huge

accumulation of debt in the US with the complete wiping out of the surplus that had been acquired under the Clinton administration – all these have contributed towards the situation. And, of course, the conflicts with Afghanistan and Iraq have not helped either; because all of this has absorbed huge quantities of money for arms and for the invasions. President Bush's recent announcement that 87 billion dollars will have to go for the continued occupation of Iraq is a huge amount for the US economy to have to bear. So we have a large number of contributory factors that have gone into the current slow down of the global economy – all of which have to be addressed.

Q: Be that as it may, recent international media headlines – shortly before the IMF and World Bank annual meetings – read: "The global economy is strengthening." "The spirit of multilateral cooperation is very much evident." The



To speak from the position of a head of state or a head of government of Sri Lanka – together with your peers, in support of this cause, and in support of remedial action – is important. Clearly, it was the intention of the UN Secretary-General when he extended the invitation that all countries should be represented at the highest level. Our President was not able to go – and that is unfortunate.

"We need to have a distributive justice, we need to have attention being paid to the poorest of the poor in these countries – the lower deciles – and therefore we need to have reforms that will enable poverty alleviation and a distributive justice to be insisted upon."

Group of 7 – which is arguably the strongest financial grouping of international heavyweights – has sounded warnings about risks, the need for greater collective efforts, and has mentioned several challenges facing continued economic recovery. The G7 is particularly keen on a reforms-linked agenda for growth. Which directions will these take, and on whom will the onus devolve?

A: All that is palpably true in a general sense I don't think one can place the onus on any one country or group of countries. It is a common onus that all of us in the international community have got to carry. Certainly, the more developed countries – the wealthier nations – have a greater ability and a greater capacity to make those changes. In the global economy, it is the developing countries that are at the other end of the spectrum. Whether it is in a nation state or in the global economy, it is clear that those who are

richer, more powerful, and more able to effect changes, are able to do better than those who are poorer and weaker. So it stands to reason that we need to have a closer collective effort; because you can't have the rich dictating what has to be done, without the cooperation of the poor. But you must accept the fact that there are some countries that have a greater capacity to make the changes than others.

Q: And yet, quite a few of these poorer countries have made politically daring and even risky changes in their regimes; particularly vis-à-vis trade liberalisation, in the hope of increased investment, pre-empting the agricultural subsidies you mentioned being cut off, and possibly cushioning themselves from commodity price fluctuations. So is there some incumbency on the First World to take these factors into consideration when pushing for a reforms-linked

agenda for growth?

A: It is entirely understandable for developing countries not to be mere recipients of aid, debt relief, and better terms of trade – while doing nothing about their internal economic structures. I mean, they *have* to reform – there is no question about that. They have to reform, not just in the interests of the global economy, but fundamentally because of their own citizens. They have to give their citizens good governance, and you can't have good governance with very rigid systems – because even within developing countries, we have to admit that there is a centre and a periphery. There are the very rich and the very poor – and we don't want policies that will polarise those differences. We need to have a distributive justice, we need to have attention being paid to the poorest of the poor in these countries – the lower deciles – and therefore we need to have reforms that will enable poverty alleviation and a distributive justice to be insisted upon. That is the price that developing countries will have to pay. Let's face it: we have a diversity of political systems in the developing world. We have dictatorships, we have army juntas, and we have democracies. You have to have good governance, you have to have the rule of law, and you have to have the practice of human rights for there to be efflorescence of economies. A late Pakistani economist said it very well when he said that development was really represented by the 'expansion of choices'. So the global poor – who are at the bottom of the ladder – have to be able to go up the ladder, so that they have wide choices; and that cannot be achieved until and unless their day-to-day conditions are improved.

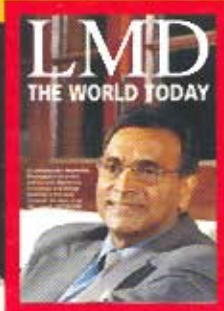
Q: The day-to-day conditions of the poorest of the poor – the lower deciles, you called it – have been of some ongoing concern. The World Bank's Development Report for 2004 has traduced South Asia's health, education and basic sanitation standards. Sri Lanka was spared the worst of the critique – although we were mentioned *inter alia* for other reasons – with Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan being particularly singled out for criticism. Of concern was state investment in these facilities. What lessons can we learn from this?

A: It is a fact that South Asia has the largest numbers of the absolute poor next to Sub-Saharan Africa – and this is not something we can be proud of as South Asians. Sri Lanka has the distinction of being second highest in terms of the Human Development Index; in terms of the UNDP report on human development, we come next to the Maldives.



PHOTO: SAHEENA CHINTAKA

STATE OF THE WORLD



But that is cold comfort; because we know ourselves – by the standards that we have set ourselves – that there are 25 per cent of people below the national poverty line. If you look at what China has been able to achieve by its own growth rates in the last decade, it has been able to lift several millions of people from being below the poverty line to above the poverty line. We need to have something similar happen in the South Asian subcontinent, because it is true that there are vast human resources and natural resources that can be harnessed to benefit the people of this area. It is held in check by a number of problems. Even in agriculture, there are a number of bottlenecks that prevent South Asia from achieving its full potential. We have to make much better progress.

particularly, manage – and now the rural poor are in a similar situation because agriculture has not been given the emphasis that it should have. I read in the newspapers alarming stories about what poor farmers have had to face in terms of declining prices as regards their paddy harvests, which have been doing extremely well for the last two years – and I wonder how we have reached this situation: where, after years of urging Sri Lanka to be self-sufficient in rice, we can't give the paddy farmer his deserving price – when we have imported goods coming so freely into the country. I don't mean that we have to be protectionist, but there seems to be some skewed economic planning taking place.

countries, you will find that it is very small. There isn't yet a pooling of economic resources, a pooling of strength vis-à-vis the non-SAARC world, for us to forge ahead as ASEAN has. We have to hope, therefore, that we can continue within the organisation to make progress in other areas until the day when we are ready for a greater cohesion, with the diminishing of the political problems between India and Pakistan.

Q: In a global milieu where the spectre of countries with nuclear capacity is increasing daily – North Korea, possibly Libya, and now Iran is on the verge of it – is there a role for SAARC to play as a political power bloc, especially as you mentioned India and Pakistan who only recently were facing off and staring each other down across a border of nuclear sabre-rattling...?

A: I am afraid that SAARC itself has very little role to play in the problems of nuclear proliferation: whether you regard it as a horizontal problem – the spread of nuclear weapons to other countries, or whether you regard it as a vertical issue – the further development of nuclear weapons by those who already have them... Because there is a serious problem between the haves and the have-nots: and one cannot seriously talk about the problem of nuclear proliferation, in the sense of other countries acquiring the nuclear weapon, when those countries which have it don't make a conscious and visible effort to get rid of their weapons. Now, in SAARC, we have two countries that crossed the nuclear threshold in 1998 and acquired nuclear-weapon capability – and they are outside the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). They haven't even signed the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty. There is very little leverage that those two countries will have internationally with regard to the discussion about preventing nuclear proliferation. But through the Non-Aligned Movement – which is a much bigger organisation, and which has traditionally stood for disarmament, and which was responsible for taking the initiative for the first session of the [UN] general assembly devoted to disarmament in 1978, and which achieved the highest watermark in international disarmament discussions, and which spawned a generation of disarmament bodies which are still functioning today – there is, because North Korea and Iran are non-aligned countries. And we may be able to have some kind of impact to ensure an even-handed approach to both the question of the have-nots acquiring the nuclear weapon and those who have it getting rid of it...

Q: Fair enough. In the course of this interview, we mentioned several international groupings of countries. But what about our own regional body: SAARC?

"Because there is a serious problem between the haves and the have-nots, one cannot seriously talk about the problem of nuclear proliferation, in the sense of other countries acquiring the nuclear weapon, when those countries which have it don't make a conscious and visible effort to get rid of their weapons."

What is the efficacy of that organisation and what role can it play – if at all – in transforming the region into an economic powerhouse or a transcontinental hub of sorts?

A: SAARC was a great vision of Bangladesh when it was first initiated – and although it met with initial resistance from India, who saw it as an effort on the part of the Lilliputians to bind Gulliver, I think that they have now realised the importance of SAARC, which was developed over the years into being the organisation that it is. I think that they began by addressing a non-controversial area like telecommunications in the hope that it would help to mute and soften some of the political divisions that existed. But obviously, the Indo-Pakistani problem has continued to bedevil SAARC, and unless we have a solution to that problem or a diminution of its gravity, we are unlikely to make progress in SAARC. Even a common market is being held back by that issue. We have had great progress, of course, and we have much greater interchange now among the SAARC countries. But if you analyse the volume of intra-SAARC trade and that between the outside world and SAARC

MEDIA SERVICES PHOTOFILE (REUTERS)



Dr. Hans Blix

Q: You have mentioned twice that 25 per cent of the people live below the universal poverty line of one US dollar a day. You even told BENCHMARK recently that it is a disgrace that they do live thus. Could you tell us briefly – although it may be unfair to turn the spotlight on you – what do you see as some of the more salient methods that you can expedite to reduce – alleviate may not be the way forward – poverty?

A: I have no magical recipe to give you. I am not an economist and I am not a politician. But I can tell you from my general reading of the situation that we need to save on our defence outlay, that we have had now for several years because of the conflict, and divert those scarce resources into better investments in health, in education, and in other essential needs of the people. The cost of living is something that we need to pay special attention to. I wonder how the urban poor,

"I think the end of the Cold War is something that we must recognise as an important advance in modern international relations. The prospects of global conflict are much less than they were during the Cold War."

Q: New nations having crossed the nuclear threshold... Warlord-ism in countries such as Afghanistan where unscrupulous governments can sow and seed WMDs... A melting-pot of nations with nuclear power... What is the real danger – if at all – of protracted nuclear conflict at any time in the near future, in a more or less unipolar world?

A: There is, today, a lowering of the threshold of the actual use of WMDs in contrast to the previous era. During the Cold War, there were checks and balances; and nobody wants to return to that era, but there was a hotline between the leaders, there were a number of agreements, they had their own national technical means – spy-in-the-sky satellites – to monitor each other. Today, there are many players; and it is a more unpredictable and uncertain, and therefore more dangerous, world. The very fact that an extremist group in Japan could have chemical weapons of mass destruction used in the subway, that we could have had a strike through transcontinental planning on the Twin Towers in New York, and the suspicion that in the Russian Federation there is a loose control of WMDs which could therefore lead to smuggling

across borders – and, of course, a lot of money is being spent now on tightening these controls, on trying to ensure greater cooperation with regard to export controls – but that is not enough... We need to have the verification of existing disarmament regimes like the chemical weapons convention, the biological weapons convention and the NPT, done by those who are responsible for it. In the case of chemical weapons, we have an organisation in The Hague; in the case of nuclear weapons, we have the IAEA in Vienna. We also need to have countries which have nuclear weapons do much, much more towards getting rid of their weapons – because, as long as there are a few countries reserving for themselves a monopoly on the right to have nuclear weapons, and seeming to enjoy certain power attributes as a result of that possession of nuclear weapons, you're going to have other countries aspiring to that – no matter how wrong that value system may be. And unfortunately, it will be done secretly, through clandestine means.

Q: Not to put too fine a point on it, nuclear proliferation aside – and given the miscellaneous conflagration that exists

around the globe today – would you say that peace is a somewhat distant if elusive dream?

A: I don't think it's a distant dream... I think we have to be balanced in our view of what has happened. I think the end of the Cold War is something that we must recognise as an important advance in modern international relations. The prospects of global conflict are much less than they were during the Cold War. It is true that we continue to have a number of intra-state conflicts in which a number of deaths have taken place – including in our own country. And that is, of course, an obstruction to global peace. I think it is possible. We have had a number of success stories – Cambodia is one, and we have Namibia; and above all, I continually remind myself – in my most pessimistic times – that I was alive at the time Nelson Mandela was freed, and when South Africa was transformed from an apartheid country into a non-racial democracy. So we have to be grateful for mercies like that. It is true that there are huge social and economic problems – including AIDS in South Africa now; but look at the situation where there was an inhuman apartheid system, and that *has* been



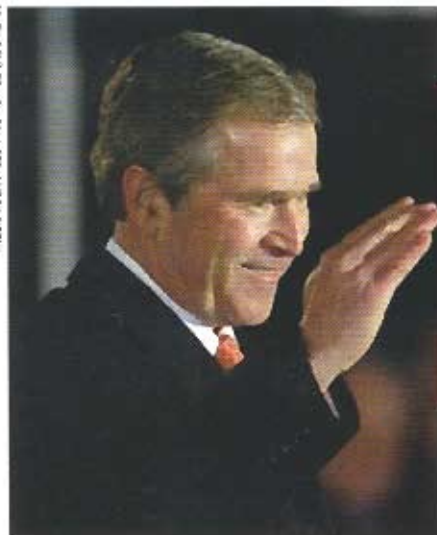
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STATE OF THE WORLD



replaced. And like that, in many other parts of the world, we have had peace growing. Europe is a case in point. China, today, is vastly more prosperous than it was a couple of decades ago. South East Asia has also advanced; and therefore, I think that the rest of the world can be optimistic with regard to the future.

Q: In an international media culture where the success stories are often buried and the failures are headlined, what would you say is the role of the United Nations in shaping the emerging New World Order that you envisage?



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ly, globalisation has affected the international community unevenly. But that is not a reason for us to rubbish globalisation totally. There are advantages in a highly integrated global economic system – because we know that we are interdependent, we have to trade with each other, we have to work together to make the world a better place and a safer place. But we must recognise, as you quite rightly said, that globalisation is not a panacea... So we have to acknowledge that globalisation has its downside and that that downside has to be corrected. It's not difficult to see where that downside has been, and the UN has been in the forefront – with the UNDP, UNCTAD and others – to try and correct this. It will take time, but it has to be done

"President Bush's recent announcement that 87 billion dollars will have to go for the continued occupation of Iraq is a huge amount for the US economy to have to bear. So we have a large number of contributory factors that have gone into the current slow down of the global economy – all of which have to be addressed."

Q: You mentioned three global powerhouses, the world economy's engines of growth: the US, the EU and Japan. Now, within the EU itself, Germany is perceived to be the engine of what is possibly emerging as a new global superpower – a United States of Europe. If you note the recent pact with Russia – the sixth within the past 200 years, and often a predecessor to German aggression, both politico-military and socio-economic – taken together with the old enemies, France and Germany, shaking hands across the border and uniting in stand against the Allies; plus increasing volumes of trade between the Eurozone and South America; what will happen to the balance of power in the world? What price the old superpower, US? What of a new superpower, China?

A: Well, I think that you ascribe too much importance to the German-Russian pact. I think there has been a warmth in German-Russian relations partly because [Russian President Vladimir] Putin has a great proficiency in the German language... I don't think that that relationship is in any way exclusive. And if you look at Europe, Germany has got some very strong relations with France and with its other EU partners. With the expansion of the EU, you are going to

have Europe as a very strong economic powerhouse. But the German economy has not been doing too well since the unification of the West and East of that country: they still carry the burden of East Germany with them, and they haven't been able to develop as well as they anticipated when the two parts of Germany coalesced. But I think this is not a matter of competition between different economic blocs. It's a question of their all working together to ensure that the world economy marches forward. China? Yes, it is beginning to become a very important economic power: the figures indicate that China achieved, for the second year in succession, more FDI than the US did. And with its high rates of growth, it is certainly going far, very fast. There are a number of internal problems: they have to make sure that the imbalance between the eastern seaboard and the rest of the country is to some extent equalised – and, of course, there are social issues like AIDS and a number of others, like corruption, which arise in the enriching of a country. But having said that, I think that today we are talking about multipolarism in the economic sense, but unipolarism in the military and political sense. The common roof of the UN is so important. That is why the common roof of shared values, shared norms is so important – and why the UN is seen by everybody as a unifying force which can help to harmonise the differences of national interest in terms of a common, cooperative security interest.

Q: Shared values, shared norms, and bipolarism. Interesting in the context of the cracks in the cosmetic face of the Commonwealth. South Africa's insistence on inviting [Zimbabwean President Robert] Mugabe, although it is Nigeria's prerogative to do so, the 'megaphone diplomacy' to which Australia resorted as a result, and the contention that this controversy could split the Commonwealth along perhaps even black-white lines... Any comments?

A: My understanding is that the Secretary-General of the Commonwealth did undertake consultations within the Commonwealth, since the three heads of state who were appointed as a subcommittee failed to come to an agreement about Mugabe's continued suspension from the Commonwealth heads of government meeting; and its findings were, I am told, that there was a majority in favour of keeping Mugabe out. This is, of course, being disputed by South Africa and being upheld by Australia – and I think these problems have got to be solved through mutual accommodation. The Commonwealth has

A: The UN has a highly under-resourced Department of Public Information, and it can transmit a message. But ultimately, it is up to the media of the world to use that; and if you look at the UN website, it is full of good stories: what UNICEF has done, what WHO has done in eliminating smallpox, what so many other international organisations like the ILO have done and the success stories in UN peacekeeping – all these are very good stories. And quite apart from that, if you read the Millennium Report of the Secretary General in the year 2000, you will find that life expectancy has improved in the world and we've had a general uplifting of the human condition.

Q: And so to globalisation: which has been variously championed as the panacea for the world's socio-economic and political ills; and contrarily critiqued as perhaps a Horseman of the Apocalypse. How would you reconcile these two extreme positions?

A: Well, as with all global trends, there is the up side and there is the down side. Clear-

"Let us today grasp the unique opportunity of the peace process to rebuild our country as a united, peaceful, democratic and economically developed nation – using the rich human and natural resources we have."

had a long history of settling such issues through a series of negotiations – like a true family of nations. This is a microcosm of the world and the UN, with the North and South and all the other continents represented in it. I hope that they could find a resolution. I think megaphone diplomacy is not something you can accuse one country of. All countries resort to this at one time or another, and ultimately it is left to quiet diplomacy to be more effective in reaching compromises.

Q: The Middle East could also be seen as a microcosm of the human political state... Now, while it is important (and you have said so, in an interview given to BENCHMARK) that Israel has a right to exist and Palestine a right to statehood, the two positions seem mutually exclusive. What's the solution? Could you also comment on the recent developments in the region that augur well or ill for the recently agreed upon road map to peace?

A: The deprivation of the inalienable and legitimate rights of the Palestinian people has been a festering issue in international affairs and the cause of wars, terrorist acts, viola-

tions of human rights, and acute poverty and hardship in the occupied territories. The current President of the US has publicly announced his support for a separate state of Palestine, and it is a matter of time before this is achieved – hopefully with the minimum of violence and suffering. The quartet consisting of the UN, the EU, Russia and the US have a phased plan for two states to live side by side in peace and security in their road map, with clear timelines and benchmarks.

This is the best hope for the region, and the negative cycle of violence based on the primal concept of 'an eye for an eye' must end in order to give this process a chance to succeed.

Q: We talked about many world groupings and international organisations... Is it the prerogative of any one or several of them to address serious global issues such as sex slavery, or the trafficking in human beings for exploitative purposes? If not, why not? After all, we are given to understand that the phenomenon is rampant – if clandestine, for obvious reasons. If so, what has been done, or is

being done, or can further be done?

A: This subject, which was highlighted by President Bush in his speech before the General Assembly, has assumed alarming proportions. It is handled as a substantive issue by the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in Vienna, as part of its efforts to combat the trafficking of human beings that goes on in different parts of the world. A protocol was concluded in 2000 to prevent, suppress and punish the trafficking of persons under the Convention against Organised Crime, and a major programme has been launched by UNODC to raise public awareness of this issue, to encourage international co-operation, and to protect victims of this terrible trade. Other UN and international bodies – like UNICEF, where children are involved; ILO; and the International Organization for Migration – are also assisting in this global task.

Q: In an interview with BENCHMARK, you commented inter alia, that Sri Lanka possesses "extraordinary leadership", but gave us to understand that personality-driven policies being preferred has hampered the natural beneficial out-



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comes of such a blessing. Who are the leaders you had or have in mind (in the course of our tete-a-tete, you mentioned the late President J. R. Jayewardene...)? And what are the reasons for your nominations?

A: Political leaders of all parties in Sri Lanka since independence have had indisputably great qualities that could have taken the nation forward as a pluralistic democracy, with the human rights of all our citizens protected and their economic conditions improved. However, political expediency, partisan politics and selfish ambitions have prevented this from happening. As a result, countries that achieved independence after us have surged ahead of us in nation-building and in sustainable economic development.

"As individuals, Sri Lankans have been remarkably successful. Our failure has been in organising ourselves collectively to do what is in the national interest of all."



There is little point now in crying over spilt milk and the missed opportunities. Let us today grasp the unique opportunity of the peace process to rebuild our country as a united, peaceful, democratic and economically developed nation – using the rich human and natural resources we have.

After decades of debate, there is – after 1977 – a broad national consensus on the need for a market-driven economy to achieve growth with equity and a rejection of a controlled statist economy. It is now vital for our national survival to forge a similar consensus on an optimum devolution of power, so that all our citizens can live in peace and harmony.

Q: In an interview with LMD, Dr. Steven Covey – the author of the influential *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* – named the traits that characterise the most effective leaders, such as being proactive, seeking first to under-

stand before being understood, thinking 'win-win', et cetera. Who, in your view, are the most effective leaders on the world stage today – and why?

A: I would prefer not to make any invidious distinctions among the leaders who are currently serving their countries. However, speaking of world leaders in my lifetime, I believe leaders of the calibre of Franklin Roosevelt of the US, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru of India, Nelson Mandela of South Africa, and Chou en-Lai of China emerged to lead their countries with courage and vision at critical moments of their history. They were statesmen who not only understood the aspirations of their people, but who inspired their nations to take new directions – both in domestic and foreign policy.

Q: There is a (perhaps unfair) perception that the power and influence of the person and office of the UN Secretary-General has diminished over the years... Once, that worthy was looked upon as 'The Leader of the World' (a concept exploited by science fiction writers like our own Sir Arthur C. Clarke); but the sceptical may wonder what happened to the Hammarskjolds and Thants of old? How would you respond?

A: The position of the Secretary-General of the United Nations is described in Article 97 of the UN Charter as the "chief administrative officer of the organisation". Some states have wanted the Secretary-General to be more 'Secretary' than 'General', while others have wanted the incumbent of the post to be more 'General' than 'Secretary'. Kofi Annan, who has been so successful in this office for more than seven years, has often joked that 'SG' stands for 'Scapegoat'! And, indeed, it appears that the SG is frequently

the fall guy when things go awry in world politics. Even Dag Hammarskjold, whose own job description of the post of SG was that it was "the most impossible job in the world", was vilified by the then USSR. The Secretary-General can only be as effective as the member states will allow him or her to be. At the same time, more use can be made of the charter provision to bring incipient threats to international peace and security to the attention of the Security Council, and to articulate the common concerns of the peoples of the world.

Q: What is your own vision for the UN?

A: The UN is much more than the sum total of its member states. As long as the nation state remains as the basic unit of a post-Westphalian international system, we will have member states pursuing their national interests – sometimes unilaterally. The United Nations must, therefore, remain as the body that will synthesise and harmonise these diverse and often conflicting national interests into a common multilaterally beneficial programme of action underpinned by international law. The UN lies at the interface between power-based realism and value-based idealism. During the Cold War, in a bipolar world, the UN had to face enormous challenges. The challenge today is to reconcile the unilateral national interests of the sole surviving superpower and its allies with the multilateral interests of the entire global community. Where these interests coincide, we have the UN flourishing in the service of humankind. Where they diverge – as was the case in Iraq recently – tensions arise, impairing the effectiveness of global governance. The UN must, therefore, work towards minimising the areas of divergence so that all member states recognise what binds them together as partners in our common planet.

Q: What are your personal aspirations for Sri Lanka?

A: It is widely recognised that the country is in a crisis. It is also a unique moment of history for this beautiful island nation to convert our uniquely rich legacy of ethnic and religious diversity into a durable political system, where all citizens can live in peace, justice and dignity with good democratic governance under the rule of law. As individuals, Sri Lankans have been remarkably successful. Our failure has been in organising ourselves collectively to do what is in the national interest of all. This is the moment for us to come together to usher in a new Sri Lanka for the 21st century, so that our people can achieve political and economic security for themselves and future generations.