

HIGH-LEVEL MEETING ON GLOBAL INTERDEPENDENCE AND NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY

Lisbon, Portugal

10 March 1990

Exactly three years ago, on 9 and 10 March 1987, we had a consultative meeting with spiritual leaders in Rome. We met with leaders of the six major religions of the world and held between us a very candid discussion. The InterAction Council recognized that the human history is at a turning point and that if solutions were to be found then an honest discussion and deep understanding was needed between the political leaders and the religious leaders in order to find solutions to a number of very fundamental problems that mankind face today. We discussed then the problems of world peace, the world economy and the global environment, population and development. These are all major issues facing humanity which require a long-term strategy and a very deep understanding. We achieved a consensus that humanity was at a brink and if we are to overcome this big challenge there must be concerted action between the religious leaders and the political leaders. That was the broad framework which was agreed. While there was broad consensus on many of the major fields, population was a sensitive area - particularly family planning - but there was a consensus that family planning was unavoidable if humanity is to survive beyond this important turning point in history. That emerged as an agreement and it was included in a joint statement that was issued. This statement was distributed widely to the political and religious leaders world-wide. I see this as one accomplishment of the InterAction Council.

One of the major issues which was discussed between the religious and political leaders was world peace. Let me share with you some of the thoughts I have on this very important issue. Needless to say that in the post-World War II politics the superpower bipolar system was the major framework. There was the Western alliance centred around the United States and the Eastern bloc alliance centred around the Soviet Union. The East and West were confronting each other; there was the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the invasion in Afghanistan, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, local wars in Asia, the tension on the Korean peninsula, the problems of Cuba, the Caribbean, Nicaragua, the Panamanian issue and the regional and local conflicts in Africa. Most of these conflicts stemmed from East-West tension and the cold war between the two superpowers. The arms race between the two camps as it accelerated had expanded into a nuclear arms race. The stockpile of nuclear arms enough to kill mankind 65 times and over. If either side used those weapons,

there would be no more earth, no more humanity. Those of us living at the end of the 20th century are living a nightmare day after day.

There is no guarantee that these enormous arsenals of nuclear arms will not be used. Recognizing the dire circumstances that we have put ourselves in, in 1983 we created this InterAction Council. If you look at the world economy or the global environment they are issues of major proportions requiring a global focus. Of course, the incumbent leaders are also concerned with these problems and they do their best. But incumbent leaders are limited because they have day to day issues they must address. They cannot always take time and think about the global problems and long-term issues that warrant attention. The incumbent leaders must represent national interests. They cannot always take a bold initiative and commit his or her nation to bold actions.

Those of us who have stepped down, therefore thought we would have a role to play with all our experience and wisdom, that we should put them together to address the truly global issues. It is with these thoughts that the InterAction Council was created. What was its focus at the initial stages in 1983? World peace of course was on the agenda: the gravest responsibility must be borne by the two superpowers - the USA and USSR. At that time the leaders of the two superpowers were not talking to each other. The last time they met was 1979. They had not spoken to each other since then. They talked to their national press describing the other as a villain and an evil empire. Thus, the first proposal that the InterAction Council made was that the leaders of the two superpowers should meet regularly. In 1984, we proposed and requested that the leaders of the two superpowers meet face to face and start a regular meeting. We did not know of course whether our proposal was the reason for the superpower summit but two years later President Reagan and Gorbachev (then Secretary General) met in Geneva in 1985. Chairman Schmidt, on behalf of the InterAction Council, congratulated the two leaders on their meeting and proposed, on behalf of the InterAction Council, that it should not be one time but a regular annual meeting. Again we don't know whether they took up the proposal but they have met annually since then. To our amazement, these summit meetings have produced results. The INF agreement was concluded and talks on long-range missiles have begun.

These are concrete results coming out of the superpower summit meetings and the political mood of the world has changed from confrontation and cold war to dialogue and co-operation and to conciliation. That is the major trend in the world's history. The USSR pulls out of Afghanistan, Iran and Iraq put an end to their war, Vietnam troops are moving out of Kampuchea, in Africa we have seen major improvements and less local conflicts. There has been a major change in the political mood worldwide because of the change in

the superpower relations. There is perestroika and glasnost in the USSR and Eastern Europe, a bold initiative by President Gorbachev. Out of that tremendous move for liberation and ethnic and national autonomy, the three Baltic nations have declared secession and independence from the USSR. The end to single-power dictatorship in Poland and tremendous changes in Czechoslovakia and Romania and also the rapid move towards reunification between the two Germanies all in a matter of recent months - certainly, we are beginning to see a new trend contrary to what we have been used since 1945. The flow is drifting in a new direction. Will this new direction continue to be with us, will the new flow brought about by Gorbachev's initiative be long-lasting? We do not have a definite answer at the moment. Would conciliation and dialogue become a new feature of world history? If so, we can be optimistic about the picture. But if this new move is going to be reversed again then we will find ourselves in dire circumstances.

I think we can afford to be optimistic if we strengthen this direction and make sure that the new trend is going to stay. We must work together so that this new wind will be established as the new order. It can't be done without conditions and without effort. Each nation must be prepared to pay a price to make this new wind become an established new order.

Another issue that threatens the peace of the world is the world economy. Since the two oil crises, the economies of both major and small economies have been threatened. Great confusion has taken place. Not all economies have been able to manage the aftermath. We have seen a threat to the Bretton Woods institutions created after World War II. We have seen the tremendous instability and volatility of money markets around the world. We have tremendous imbalances among the nations of what we call the North (Germany, Japan with their excessive surpluses, the US as a major debtor). These imbalances are threatening because of their proportions. Then, there are imbalances between North and South. How do we adjust this gap? We have made proposals to try and correct the imbalance between North and South and to handle the imbalance of capital flows around the world and how to manage indebtedness.

The economic aspects of the arms race cannot be neglected. The USSR spent too much on arms at the sacrifice of the life of its people. The shortage of consumer goods in the USSR is a result of too much money spent on the arms race. The USSR spends 40 percent of its national budget on arms - 14 percent of her GNP is invested in arms, it claims it is 8 percent. Scholars around the world agree that the USSR spends 14 percent on military spending. Nobody will deny that this has had an effect on the Soviet life and the Soviet power. For the United States it is the same. It suffers from a twin deficit. As a

result the world economy has been confused and very few national economies can be managed. This put together is the major threat to the stability and peace of the world. World War II triggered by a 1929 depression, crash on Wall Street, tremendous war indebtedness of the German government and war reparations, and tremendous shortage of resources world wide. If we can learn to manage the world economies we would be making a tremendous contribution to the stability of the world. But a stopgap sort of economic policy might override some of the gaps but it will not ensure long-lasting stability for the 21st century.

There are more difficult problems of population and managing the global environment. We have learned many times about the world population which was about 1.6 billion at the turn of the century and now stands at 5.2 billion. By the end of the century it will be 6.2 billion. It is like having a time bomb and the fate of humanity rests on it. We cannot permit the population to grow unrestrained, undisciplined and unmanaged. If the population was permitted to increase it will not rest at 20 billion but 25 billion by the 21st century. This globe will not be able to absorb or feed that 25 billion people in terms of space, land, air, clean water etc. Resources are limited and the population cannot be allowed to grow unlimited. There would be inherent tension between the unlimited growth of population and limited resources of earth. Unless we manage and resolve this population problem we will not ensure stability of the 21st century. Three years ago, at our consultative meeting in Rome we also discussed the environment and we did the same at our Moscow session. Subsequently, the Prime Minister of Japan accepted the need to focus on the importance of linking development, population and environment and so it was placed on the agenda of the Toronto summit which recognised that environment would certainly become a global agenda item. A host of other conferences has followed since trying to agree on specific proposals to address the global environment issue. The InterAction Council has submitted concrete propositions to incumbent leaders. If you look at the history of the InterAction Council and some of the activities we have been able to carry out, you must realise that a national interest, a unilateral national action is not going to be enough to ensure the survival of humanity. The national sovereignty must be put into question. We must go beyond national borders and national interests. We must represent the interests of humanity, of the whole globe and act on that premise otherwise any action taken would pose a danger to the fate and future of all of us. Whether it is world politics or other global problems or global issues, we cannot avoid taking a perspective of one globe, one humanity. National interests are important to national peoples but they must be redefined from the perspective of global interests, what is good for the whole of humanity. I think it is time that we do that: redefine national sovereignty from a global

perspective and from the perspective of ensuring the survival of all mankind. The leaders of the political, religious and all other worlds must take every opportunity to educate the people that we must act from the point of view of what is good for all of us. As we accept that perspective then we might ensure our own survival. We must take every opportunity to educate incumbent leaders to go beyond narrow national perspectives to take up the global perspective. We must be committed to national interests but beyond that to global interests because that is the only way we will ensure the survival of ourselves and our posterity. We must educate the people to take a comprehensive global perspective. That is the only one that is relevant today and I am not a scholar or expert but an experienced politician and that is what I feel.