

Eighteenth Plenary Meeting  
Helsinki, Finland  
17-20 June 2000

***Bringing a Northern Dimension to the World Vision***

Major changes continued to take place in the final year of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Vladimir Putin was elected to the Russian Presidency in March and Russia ratified the CTBT in May. For the Council, it was the year when two of its important members passed away, Pierre Trudeau in September and Jacque Chaban-Delmas in November. The United States saw confusion over the presidential election, and it was more than a month after the Election Day when Al Gore finally conceded defeat and George W. Bush was declared the new President.

The host country of the 18<sup>th</sup> annual session, Finland, was keen to examine the future of Russia and its relationship with its neighbours. The Stockholm School of Economics in Sweden agreed to host a preparatory meeting on 27-29 April. Kalevi Sorsa chaired the meeting and Helmut Schmidt and Ingvar Carlsson, a new member from Sweden, participated from the Council. Sixteen experts on Russian affairs came from Europe, the United States and Asia in addition to three Russians.

The group welcomed Vladimir Putin's election victory as the President of Russia. They considered his main task to be to lay the foundations for building a modern nation. This would involve economic restructuring that needed to go wide and deep. The group considered the tasks of other states in their relations with Russia in this modernisation context. For the U.S. the issue was to persuade Russia to accept the obligations of a modern state. Europe had to work out how to respond to Russia's desire to try to become part of the European Community. For the West as a whole, the issue was to wire Russia into the information age. The group also called the attention of leaders outside to consider how they could help to put out sparks and brush fires in Central Asia before they could develop into dangerous flash point and conflagration.

The other high-level expert group was to consider responsible and enlightened leadership in the new century. Helmut Schmidt and Abdul Salam Majali co-chaired the meeting held at the JFK School of Government at Harvard. Jose Sarney attended from the Council and 17 high-level experts were also present to give their wisdom. The group defined the key elements of leadership as the factors to change society in a way that would benefit society as a whole, and also to provide accountability and transparency in decision-making. A major challenge to leaders was the increasing global problems of the world, though leadership remained national. Leadership at the global level required leaders to demonstrate to their constituents that global problems had significant national impacts. The group also asserted that enlightened leaders in the private sector

should play a key role in the development of ethical business practices which took into account both economic and broader social values.

### **Helsinki Meeting**

The Finnish Government set the dates of the 18<sup>th</sup> session during the magnificent White Nights. The atmosphere was particularly lively, since Helsinki was celebrating its 450<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The Finnish Foreign Ministry acted as the local organiser, proving Finnish friendliness and efficacy in every way. With the ageing membership, the number of participants from the Council dwindled to 16. The new faces in the 18<sup>th</sup> session were Ingvar Carlsson twice Prime Minister of Sweden in the 1980s and from 1994 to '96, Bacharudin Jusuf Habibie, President of Indonesia from 1998 to 99, Valdis Birkavs, former Prime Minister of Latvia and Jamil Mahuad, former President of Ecuador. In addition, the Organising Chairman Kalevi Sorsa arranged to invite three former Finnish leaders as well as from Estonia and Lithuania, making the top level participation altogether 22. The number of special guests was also 22, thus making the entire group quite large.

The Government of Finland made the old building that had previously housed the House of the Estates available for the Council meeting. The well-preserved classic building provided an atmosphere that was beneficial for the Council discussions. It was also convenient for the group, as it was a walking distance from Hotel Kamp where they stayed, and they could enjoy the stroll of the White Nights. At the opening session with invited guests and journalists, Honorary Chairman Helmut Schmidt briefly explained the background of the InterAction Council.

Chairman Malcolm Fraser gave the keynote speech, which started out with a detailed analysis of the lessons of the Asian crisis. These included how Malaysia had proved that the IMF prescription was not the only way; how precarious the Abudlraham Wahid Administration of Indonesia would be; how the One-China Policy could not allow an independent Taiwan, how dangerous it was to view with optimism the future development of the Korean Peninsula. On the question of India and Pakistan, he advocated total nuclear disarmament. After comments on the Middle East and Africa, he offered a comprehensive analysis of the Balkan situation, concluding by questioning, on legal and moral grounds, the right of outside interventions without UN Security Council approval. Finally, he warned the danger of the US position on the ABM system and concluded that the group must search for a world in which international standards and legalities could be applied and upheld.

The incumbent Prime Minister Paavo Lipponen of Finland, had delayed his departure to the Council of Europe meeting in Feira, Portugal, to greet the InterAction Council. He elaborated on Finnish views about Europe and the political and economic processes in the Baltic States, which were being dynamically integrated into European structures.

He was proud of the Finnish role within the EU that gave a new northern perspective to the Union. He detailed the important processes under way in the EU, including how to respond to crises, enlargement of the union, reform of its institutional structures and progress on creating the internal market, employment, economic reforms and social cohesion. He also indicated that the Finnish Government was actively involved in helping the changes taking place in the Baltic States, for which he predicted a promising future. Finland was also taking an active part in discussions about question of NATO membership by former Eastern states like Poland. He added that the EU's common strategy on Russia – to promote a strategic partnership with the EU – was of particular importance to Finland, the only EU state to have a border with Russia. His confident assertion - “In a modern globalised world, small states like Finland can play a significant role in promoting cooperation and partnership in international relations” - struck a chord with many listeners coming from both large and small countries.

The Finnish Government's hospitality and generosity were heart warming. Foreign Minister Erkki Troumoja hosted the welcome reception at the Government Guest House. Defense Minister Jan-Erik Enestm hosted a dinner at Wallhalla, an 18<sup>th</sup> century fortress island that had been designated as a world treasure by UNESCO, and President Mauno Koivisto hosted a dinner in the elegant Savoy restaurant. Moreover, the participants were able to enjoy the beautiful Nordic White Nights through their stay in Helsinki. One surprise came to those from much warmer climates when hailstones dropped one afternoon, lowering the temperature to below zero in June.

Discussions on the state of the world were based on speeches made by Prime Minister Paavo Lipponen and Chairman Malcolm Fraser. The mood was to welcome some of the recent developments, particularly the distinctive northern dimension that Finland added to the EU's vision, the historic summit between North and South Korea, the signs of economic recovery in Asia, China's entry to the World Trade Organisation, and US President Clinton's statement on the “One China Policy.” However, a host of problems undermining the peace and stability of the world were also identified, including the growing income disparity having been brought on by globalisation, uneven improvements in democracy and economic recovery in Latin America, continued African difficulties, the US readiness to take unilateral military action, the NATO actions against Serbia without UN Security Council approval, the acquisition of nuclear weapons by India and Pakistan, the U.S. intention to construct a missile defence system, and the stalled Middle East Peace Process.

The session to discuss the future of Russian, chaired by Kalevi Sorsa, had an important absentee participant from Russia, Mikhail Gorbachev. He participated in the session through a paper he specifically wrote for the Helsinki Meeting. He pointed to three new problems of the era:

manageability of the issues of globalisation, safeguarding the identity of countries and people as globalisation increased, and the destiny of the third world. He painted his own idea of the New World Order, which would encompass diversity, equal rights, balance of interests, mutual respect and tolerance. In this context, his vision of Russia was one of a democratic and modern “New Russia.” He argued that the process would require rebuilding the authority of the state, revising the state’s manageability based on federative principles and the rule of law, combating corruption and crime, and developing a social post-industrial market economy.

The Council itself endorsed the report of the expert group on the future of Russia. Russia was facing identity crisis. While welcoming Putin’s election as President, the Council expected him to embark on reforms touching not only the functioning of the state but the working of society and the economy as a whole. It urged the Russian Government to end the war in Chechnya as soon as possible. The Council warned the West that perceived Western intrusiveness could easily fuel Russian nationalism and possibly retard the process of reform. And the international community was asked to encourage Russian integration politically, economically and technologically.

The last session discussed the report of the Harvard meeting. “Enlightened Leadership and Responsibility.” This was a particularly important theme for the old timers who had spent more than a decade in meetings to devise universal ethical standards. Discussion evolved over what an enlightened leader was. The consensus emerged was that “he or she is one who employs an ethical standard pertinent to the community that he represents; he should be judged not only by results but also by the means used to achieve these results.”

One issue that also was heavily discussed was the influence of media, to which Hanna Suchocka drew attention. The increasingly rapid and thorough distribution of information in modern societies created new possibilities for leaders. Manipulation of the levers of power became more difficult as the ideal of a free and robust mass media spread throughout the world. It was noted that the power of the media to inform and educate constituents and the ability of leaders to focus the media’s influence for beneficial purposes had become crucial aspects of leadership.

A Finnish special guest announced that the Finnish parliament had established a Global Ethics Committee. The Council applauded the Finnish move and urged other nations to create a similar organ to address problems arising from the degeneration of moral and ethical standards.

The Helsinki meeting had a highly moral atmosphere, which was very appropriate for the outset of not only the new century but also the millennium.

At the end of the Helsinki session, it was announced that the 19<sup>th</sup> session would be held on Awaji

Island, on the Inland Sea of Japan. The first item on the agenda for the meeting would be “East Asia and the Pacific in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century” and the other “Pluralism and Global Governance.” The implication of the latter theme was how the rest of the world should cope with the growing unilateralism of the one and the only superpower.