Keynote Address by H.E. Mr. H.K. Singh, Ambassador of India* at the UNU
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“New Leadership - Future of the Global Community”

It is my great pleasure and privilege to be here today at this prestigious Forum and amidst such a distinguished audience.

As I reflected on the topic, “New Leadership – Future of the Global Community”, my mind traveled down memory lane to my own days at the University some four decades ago, and I found myself recalling a song by the famous lyricist-poet Bob Dylan, “The Times They Are A-Changin’.” This very popular song of its times carried a deep message for parents, thinkers and political leaders alike: become part of the changing times or be left behind forever. This is a message which is as much valid today as it was then. In fact, the pace of change we have to contend with has only accelerated and the complexities of the world which we must confront have accentuated.

When we speak of challenges in the context of leadership and the future of the global community, we obviously want to focus on the kind of changes taking place today and the kind of leadership we think will be required to steer the world through these successfully. I do not propose to dwell at length on definitions of what exactly we mean by the terms “leadership” and the “global community”. I would, instead, like to approach the subject from a people-oriented perspective, namely, the human values-based endeavours in which all peoples and nations of the world must engage to secure their common future of peace, progress and prosperity.

In this process, I will of course refer to the experiences of my own country, India, and to the shared responsibilities which fall on the shoulders of India and Japan as strategic partners in an Asian Century.

* Note: The views expressed in this address are in his personal capacity.
The ideas which I will bring before you represent but one perspective. There are myriad others. My hope and expectation is that this presentation will generate a meaningful discussion.

Mankind’s march towards the modern era can perhaps be traced back to the 18th and 19th centuries, which witnessed fundamental changes in the way Western societies organized themselves. The first industrial revolution powered by steam seamlessly led to the second, powered by the internal combustion engine and electricity. Alongside momentous technological and economic progress, societies too evolved to accommodate sectoral changes. The process was much too complex to discuss at any great length. However, seminal ideas that we take for granted today were the product of these times, including those of free trade, political and economic liberty and the rule of law. Two powerful schools of thought on political economy that have shaped the world, capitalism and communism, were also born.

The leadership exercised in this period by the West was far from benign, for these centuries also saw the extensive colonization of Asia and Africa in an exploitative framework, whose legacy has left the globe divided even today between the first and the third worlds.

The process of change accelerated rapidly over the 20th century, which has been described as the “short century” for the frenetic pace of transformations which gave rise to major political and strategic, economic and social, as well as scientific and technological changes. We went through two World Wars and saw the birth and demise of the Cold War; experienced the end of colonialism and the emergence of newly independent countries which constitute the majority today; joined in the quest for sustainable development and good governance; saw the evolution of multilateralism and regionalism; witnessed remarkable advances in basic and applied sciences and a veritable revolution in information and communications technology; and benefited from improvements in public health and standards of living in many parts of the globe.

However, the dominant outcome and legacy of the past century which has been carried over into our current times has been

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*2 Eric Hobsbawm
“globalization” on the one hand and the expanding aspirations of peoples around the world for a brighter future on the other.

The “short century”, albeit a period of unparalleled developments, was far from perfect. The Civilizational values of mankind were frequently distorted and in the midst of a continuous ideological struggle for economic and political dominance, the social good was never fully accommodated.

The geo-political and developmental situation of the world today remains under transition. As new relationships are being forged in different parts of the world and fresh paradigms for growth and development introduced, there remain serious impediments to the equitable distribution of economic and social benefits, even as political and security concerns arising from emerging trans-national issues are also yet to be addressed.

I believe that it would be useful, therefore, to recognize certain universal values which must guide the new leadership for the future of global community.

The debate on the importance of human rights and fundamental freedoms is rich and varied. There is a clear perception that peace, freedom and democracy are valuable everywhere.

However, arguments still continue to be put forward denying the universal importance of freedom. It is sometimes contended, for instance, that so-called “Asian Values” do not attach the same importance to freedom as it is accorded in the West, and that social order and communal good are more important. Another theme often advanced is that the West attaches higher priority to human rights in the areas of civil and political liberties while “Asian Values” tend to focus on the right to economic development and may thus even overlook authoritarianism.

Nobel Laureate Prof. Amartya Sen’s detailed examination of this subject*3, while recognizing the heterogeneous nature of Asian society, concluded that “Asian Values” are not significantly different from those of the West for a comparable period of time and strata of society. Sen

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argues that tolerance, as a forerunner of modern democracy, was equally present in ancient societies both in the Orient and in the West.

Sen also does not find any empirical evidence to suggest that authoritarian governance and suppression of civil and political rights is really supportive of and benefits economic development, or that there is a conflict between these rights and economic performance. In fact, Sen contends, there is a connection between democracy and political and civil rights on the one hand and the prevention of major economic and social disasters on the other.

Sen concludes that there are universal values based on tolerance and freedom and that human rights help to build on the notion of a shared humanity. He further suggests that the recognition of diversity within different cultures is equally important to the contemporary world.

I wish to bring Prof. Amartya Sen's ideas before you in the hope that you will recognize their validity and the importance of values and principles to our emerging global order.

Let us now examine some of the core values and needs that are globally applicable and which must be the beacon to guide humanity through this new century.

**Democracy**

First, we need to recognize the value of democracy. The essence of this value lies in its ability to promote individual freedom and aspirations while accommodating diversity. Open debate and reasoned discourse ensure that policies are evolved for the common good. Elected representation and accountability ensure that social and economic progress become integral parts of the democratic process. Democracy not only protects the interests of the individual, but it also nurtures a human perspective in progress.

While I am convinced that democracy is a fundamental value, I am equally convinced that this has to come about as an endogenous
realization through a consciously exercised social will and national institution building, rather than as an externally imposed concept.

**Prosperity**

Secondly, we have to strive for the prosperity of all. Islands of affluence in a sea of poverty are not sustainable in an interdependent world. A more understanding and cooperative spirit between the developing world striving for growth and the developed world seeking to sustain its high living standards must be found if the benefits of globalization are to be shared fairly. Imbalances in the global regimes for trade, financial and technological flows must be addressed in order to stem existing disparities. At the same time, the social impact of the process of growth must be carefully assessed while shaping more sustainable growth models, taking into account local conditions and resources. Environmental sustainability must also be a critical part of development, so that the natural habitat which is the common heritage of all humanity can be preserved for future generations.

**Tolerance and Pluralism**

Thirdly, we must promote tolerance and pluralism, within and among societies as well as countries. Genuine respect for the inherent diversity of the world’s ethnic, cultural and religious heritage is crucial for the maintenance of global harmony. The vitality of mankind’s future can be enhanced through the preservation of this diversity as a mosaic and not a melting pot, as well as the promotion of pluralism in social and political life. Special efforts must be invested in respecting the rights of minorities and removing all vestiges of discrimination against them. The promotion of tolerance as a core value is the best means of countering growing religious extremism in some parts of the globe.

**Security**

Fourth, we have to provide for the security of rich and poor alike, as this cannot be the privilege of developed societies alone. It is only with confidence in a secure future that the human spirit can endeavour to scale new heights.

Efforts are currently underway to evolve a common understanding of a new concept of human security. This concept cannot be narrowly focused on violent threats to the individual and the state’s responsibility to protect. Human security requires a comprehensive approach designed to
enhance human freedom and fulfillment through both the protection and the empowerment of individuals and communities. In addition to securing “freedom from fear and freedom from want”, the notion of human security must encompass economic well being by mainstreaming development to ensure that individuals can pursue a life of dignity. The framework of human security must also encompass concerns over terrorism and trans-boundary issues such as human-trafficking, drug trafficking, organized crime and international migration. Helping individuals and societies to secure their right to development, and increasing ODA assistance to developing countries to meet their MDGs, can make the greatest contribution to human security.

It is sometimes argued that the importance of nation states has waned, and that state sovereignty may somehow be an impediment to the universal enjoyment of human rights. This is surely not the case. Human rights and human security require, more than anything else, national capacity and strong state institutions. Failed or weak states cannot protect their citizens and can only generate insecurity. States which claim to have created the most favourable environment for human rights are also those with the strongest sovereignties.

On the broader geo-political front, the expectations of a new era of security and stability after the end of the Cold War have not yet been realized. Instead, new conflicts and security challenges have emerged, including those posed by the growth of fundamentalism and terrorism. The emergence of non-state actors which undermine global security pose another challenge to open societies based on freedom and the rule of law.

The world needs a new paradigm in which old models of confrontation and balance of power give way to greater global consultation and cooperation for stability, social progress and economic development. Global security needs multilateral solutions that are part of a broad, participatory process. Unfortunately, the UN Security Council retains a structure that is completely outdated in terms of the existing global landscape. Its expansion should encompass both permanent and non-permanent categories, with greater representation of developing countries in both. Representation should also be reflective of current realities. In addition, there should also be a comprehensive improvement in the working methods of the Security Council.
Globalization

Let me now move on to the phenomenon of “globalization”. Never before in human history has the world appeared to be so interconnected and so interdependent. Globalization is bringing about the rapid integration of both the real and financial sector economies across the world.

For this process to fully benefit the developing world, the challenge is to create models of “inclusive” globalization that ensure a more balanced distribution of benefits. Only then can globalization be seen less as an ideological pursuit and more of an efficient means to enhance economic interdependence and target broader poverty alleviation through rapid growth. Both developed and developing countries need to recognize that globalization is not a zero-sum game. To the contrary, all stand to gain from freer trade, enhanced FDI and increased capital flows.

In his 1970 work “Future Shock”, Alvin Toffler had warned that transformation of the industrial society into a super-industrial society would create an “information overload” and “shattering stress and disorientation” for a bewildered generation. Instead, the computer revolution, culminating in mind-numbing improvements in information and communications technology, has radically changed the way peoples, companies and nations interact with each other, bringing about enormous improvements in efficiency and productivity in all areas of human activity. The Internet has become a source of empowerment on an unprecedented scale.

Another encouraging aspect today is the emerging vision of a global community in which all peoples can stand united for the common good of mankind. As India awoke to freedom sixty years ago, this vision was articulated by Jawaharlal Nehru, our first Prime Minister, in the following prescient words:

Quote

“. . . . . . all the nations and peoples are too closely knit together today for any one of them to imagine that it can live apart. Peace has been said to be indivisible; so is freedom, so is prosperity now,
and so also is disaster in this One World that can no longer be split into isolated fragments\(^*\)*

Unquote

Globalization means new opportunities; it also means shared responsibilities for resolving current and tackling future problems. I have already referred to the need for concerted efforts to propagate core human values. The many other challenges of globalization that require collective global attention include economic issues such as technology flows, trade and investment; energy security; environmental protection and climate change; prevention of disease and pandemics; and natural disaster mitigation and relief.

Owing to time constrains, I can touch upon only a few of these important issues.

Energy security, environmental conservation and climate change constitute a triad requiring the urgent attention of the world community.

With 17% of the world’s population, India accounts for just 4% of global GHG emissions. As India pursues development and economic growth, we are determined to ensure that energy intensity grows at a much lower pace than GDP and that India’s per-capita GHG emissions are not going to exceed those of developed countries.

The average annual consumption of electricity per capita in India is low compared to the world average, and about 4% of the average per capita consumption of Japan. However, with India’s projected growth rate of 8% or more through 2031-32, we will need to increase primary energy supply by three to four times and electricity generation capacity by five to six times their current levels. More than half of this will still have to come from coal.

For India, clean and affordable energy is a critical necessity. In our discussions with the international community on energy security, we have come to the conclusion that international cooperation in civil nuclear energy can make a significant contribution to our efforts. This is the basic

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\(^*\) Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru’s “Tryst with Destiny” speech to the Indian Parliament at midnight on 14-15 August, 1947.
premise behind the India-US Agreement on Civil Nuclear Energy Cooperation. We will need to build other partnerships as well, on technical cooperation in alternative and renewable energy, clean coal technology, energy conservation and efficiency, and the cooperative development of energy supply chains. Japan, in particular, will be our valued partner in this process.

The issue of global warming and climate change is at the forefront of international concern. Progress in meeting Kyoto Protocol targets has been mixed. More than half of GHG missions emanate from OECD countries. The adverse effects of global warming caused by accumulated and continued high emissions by the industrialized world will largely be felt by developing countries. It is imperative that developed countries commit themselves to significantly higher levels of GHG reductions at the forthcoming meeting of States Parties to the UNFCCC.

In an important address in Kyoto on 30 August, 2007, German Chancellor Angela Merkel has endorsed the equal per capita principle and an approach to Climate Change based on convergence of per capita emissions originating in developing countries and industrialized countries. This is an important step forward. We hope that such ideas can be developed further into practical and pragmatic strategies within the ambit of the UNFCCC, in accordance with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, respective capabilities and specific national circumstances. It is of vital importance that such solutions allow for developing countries to pursue accelerated economic and social development, which is, in any case, an imperative for adaptation.

Contribution of India

Let me now share with you some thoughts about the contribution of India towards the emerging global community.

We have just celebrated the 60th anniversary of India’s independence, and it is with a certain sense of justifiable pride that we can lay claim to being the world’s largest, value-based democracy that has consistently maintained its focus on the human dimensions of social progress. Indeed, India has been true to Nehru’s promise of building “up a prosperous, democratic and progressive nation, and to create social,
economic and political institutions which will ensure justice and the fullness of life to every man and woman.”*

India today is the most successful example of the democratic organization of a vast, diverse and developing society of more than a billion people, striving to prosper together in harmony. An over-arching sense of nationhood binds our people together even as ethnic, linguistic, cultural and religious diversity is welcomed. India’s spirit of tolerance, its open and assimilative cultural disposition and its commitment to non-violence carry a deep meaning for the contemporary world.

Remarkable transformations are underway in India. Its economic success since the 1990s should put to rest misguided notions such as the basic incompatibility between rapid growth and democracy, or between the demands of economic efficiency and social equity. Indeed, quite the contrary is true. The India Story establishes that the only way of prospering in a sustainable manner is to do so within a democratic framework that can ensure that the benefits of economic growth can be widely dispersed.

It is India’s democratic foundations and institutions, which provide ample opportunity for open debate and consensus building, that have enabled us to smoothly and effectively undertake economic reforms and embrace liberalization and globalization.

India has demonstrated beyond doubt that the best, if not the only, way to manage both diversity and growth, without an assault on basic human freedoms, is the democratic way. It also offers an example of how democracy ensures that the interests of minorities are secured.

The nature and quality of India’s economic growth, which is set to be sustained at around 9% or more for many years to come, is yet another distinctive example. India’s growth model derives sustenance from within rather than without. It is mainly powered by India’s own corporates, entrepreneurs, human resources, savings, investment and consumer demand. With this inherent strength, India can absorb increasing levels of

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* Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru’s “Tryst with Destiny” speech to the Indian Parliament at midnight on 14-15 August, 1947.
FDI and FII without the risk of disturbing its macro-economic balance or being subjected to the vagaries of foreign demand.

The promise and economic potential of India has major implications for the Asian region, and indeed for the world. We cannot sustain growth in isolation and are committed to wider engagement, both regionally and globally. India is working for enhanced economic partnerships within our immediate neighbourhood of SAARC, and for greater regional connectivity between SAARC and East Asia. Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh enunciated his vision of an “Arc of Prosperity and Advantage” at the ASEAN Summit in 2004. Since then, India has been actively pursuing an integrationist agenda with ASEAN, while also supporting economic integration among EAS countries.

India and Japan

In an at once glittering and dark globe, I believe that India and Japan have much to contribute to both the glitter and to the reduction of darkness.

As Asia's largest and most prosperous democracies, India and Japan are natural partners. They have much to contribute to each other, and to providing visionary leadership for the Asian Century.

Japan’s technological prowess, managerial expertise and financial strength can empower the economic dynamism and youthful vigour of India to generate economic prosperity for both countries.

In an era in which the balance of global growth is shifting towards Asia and several new economic powers are emerging across our shared region, India and Japan can also work closely together for the promotion of peace and stability as well as regional integration.

India envisions an Asian Community that is open and inclusive and provides for the free flow of goods, people, finance and ideas. This harmonises with Japan’s proposal for an EPA among EAS countries. Japan and India both agree that geographical exclusivity is not the right option for a forward looking concept such as a future East Asia Community.

The East Asia Summit process has laid the foundations for a cooperative regional architecture, which India and Japan must carry forward in the coming years. Community building will need to follow a
step-by-step and grassroots approach in which the stakeholders are directly engaged. Regional connectivity in terms of trade, transport and movement of people and capital needs to be built up through appropriate modalities, which can gradually take a region-wide dimension.

With their shared values and converging interests, India and Japan can contribute meaningfully to the long-term security and prosperity of an Asian Community.

Conclusion

It is imperative that we build a broad convergence of views on what New Leadership for the future of the global community implies.

Much of the changes that are taking place around the globe today are technology driven. Advances in pure sciences and in bio, nano and information technologies will continue to hasten the pace of change to the extent that it may not even be possible to envision today what this world will be like in the second half of the 21st Century.

However, the hopes and aspirations of mankind will fundamentally remain the same. And if we exercise the right leadership, the world today is much more capable of fulfilling these aspirations than at any time before in history.

The flag bearers of the New Leadership must, therefore, ensure that:

• Human beings everywhere can live fulfilling lives in dignity.
• There is greater understanding of universal values that enhance human freedom and opportunity and secure the future of mankind.
• The global community accepts its own rich diversity, embraces pluralism, and promotes coexistence.
• Cross-cultural understanding is built through the promotion of tolerance.
• The powerful forces of globalization underway are harnessed to make the world more and more prosperous and much more equitable.
• Change and progress is inclusive and does not leave behind marginalized segments.
• The natural environment and resources of the world are adequately conserved for future generations; and
• Multilateral organizations and institutions that help manage our interdependent world are reformed to fully reflect the geo-political and economic realities of our times, thereby enhancing their effectiveness.

As the march of history goes on, Ladies and Gentlemen, the goal must be no less than to fulfill Mahatma Gandhi’s dream, “To wipe every tear from every eye”. So long as that remains distant, the work of the New Leadership will not be over.

Thank you for your attention.