

## **Address on the occasion of the Honoris Causa Degree ceremony**

The Salon De Diputados, Old Congress, Santiago, Chile, 7 June 2005

Rector of the Universidad de Chile, Luis Riveros,  
Prorector, Jorge Litvak,  
You're Excellencies,  
Distinguished guests,  
Ladies and gentlemen:

I am very privileged and honoured to receive this high accolade from one of the pre-eminent universities of the world. In all humility and with sincerest gratitude, I accept this Honoris Causa degree on behalf of the people of South Africa and Africa, who won our liberation and today continue to fight poverty, underdevelopment and global marginalisation.

Chile and South Africa share a common bond - of ancient indigenous peoples, of conquest and imperialism, of colonialism, oppression and resistance.

Gathered here today is a cross-section of the leadership of this country and accordingly it will be appropriate to ask that we form partnerships between the Chilean people and South Africans and work together to open 'a thousand doors' towards a better life for all our people and 'invent new worlds' where poverty and underdevelopment would be a nightmare long forgotten.

Clearly, this means dealing with the many challenges that characterise the phenomenon of globalisation. I am confident that this important conclave of intellectuals and leaders in different fields, can and should further engage the suggestions that we are privileged to put forward today and accordingly form these necessary links and partnerships.

Both Chile and South Africa know many of our fellow citizens whose lives are characterised by the indecency of poverty; those who live in poor shelter or food; people whose daily routine is a perpetual motion of survival.

Both Chile and South Africa also know about others who live a better life; whose daily struggle is not survival but a continuous activity to better the achievements of yesterday to increase their property and portfolios. Again, we both know of men and women, globally, who inhabit the two worlds of poverty and affluence. At times, those who are rich and powerful even pretend that the poor and the weak do not exist, that their high walls of affluence will defend them from those whose pangs of hunger have dulled their cries of pain.

We know the division imposed on our societies by autocracy and racism. It is these scars, etched in our collective souls, that bind us and leave us with no choice but to form strong partnerships and work together for a better world.

As we know, the need for partnerships within and beyond national borders has evolved over time. John Micklewaith and Adrian Wooldridge in their book 'A Future Perfect' discuss what they describe as 'elite' partnerships. They write: "The idea of 'a global ruling class' has been one of the great canards of modern history - a trigger for resentment, persecution, and paranoia. Before the rise of democracy, European politics were indeed the preserve of a fairly coherent elite. Most monarchs - and many leading politicians - were related to one another. Everybody who mattered had read the same classical texts. French had established itself so firmly as an international language that both Frederick the Great of Prussia and Metternich wrote their memoirs in it. National leaders were so pally that they even held honorary positions in each other's armies. In 1910 for example, Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany turned up at Edward VII's funeral dressed in the scarlet uniform of a British field Marshal."

The writers continue:

"Some fragments of this life survive even today. But in general this dandified class has been swept away by revolutions, nationalism, and the 'discovery' of the Americas, Africa, and the East. "(P228, A Future Perfect, Published by Crown Publishers, 2000)

Clearly, the elite, the rich and the powerful have always been good at forming partnerships for mutual benefit. Even when they occasionally went to war against one another, to assert their hegemony, in the long periods of tranquillity they have always collaborated so as to better regulate their affairs and ensure that those who are excluded, do not threaten the status quo.

It is also true that while the United Nations has always had the potential to be a 'new seat of power', this has not been possible because of the structural fault in the international system of governance.

Indeed the question should be asked as to who represents the poor globally?

We are aware that the Secretary-General has initiated bold moves to revitalise and democratise the United Nations and I am confident that together we will play our part to ensure that we transform this world body to be a true representative of all the peoples of the world.

Like the elites of Europe who were related to one another and read the same classical texts, used the same language, French, to write their memoirs and held honorary positions in each other's armies, I would like the people of Chile and those of South Africa and our two regions also to be related to one another, to read the same literature, use the same language that articulates the need and preparedness to defeat poverty, underdevelopment and marginalisation.

Together we should hold honorary positions in our respective universities and research institutions and in our regional bodies such as the African Union and the Community of South American Nations. We should share experiences on how to deepen our democracies; how to ensure respect for human and people's rights.

We should collaborate and share ideas and engage in practical programmes that would ensure that our people experience prosperity and move away from the undesirable situation of underdevelopment and exclusion. Indeed, our generation is charged by history to find ways of bridging the gulf between the two worlds of affluence and poverty. This we should do both in our own countries as well as in the metaphorical global village.

Accordingly, we have a duty together to attend to the pressing challenges facing us both in our own countries and in the world. The ability to be both indigenous and exotic, to be both at home and foreign is what should define us as we confront the problems facing our people whether they are resident in Chile or in South Africa, or anywhere else in the world for that matter.

I know that many of us are aware that the African continent is engaged in a process of development and regeneration through an AU programme, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). This is a programme through which the people of Africa are harnessing their resources, both natural and human, to put their countries, individually and collectively, on a development path.

The African intelligentsia, businesspeople, workers, youth and women are engaged in this programme of the renaissance of the continent. It is because of this energy, enthusiasm, self-belief and the preparedness to learn from past mistakes that we have boldly proclaimed the 21st century as the African century of hope and prosperity.

We also know that Chile and the region are equally engaged in continuous efforts to defeat poverty and ensure prosperity for all the citizens of South America.

Because our agendas are similar, it would be appropriate to say that when we engage in these programmes we would do so not only for short term selfish interests, but for a common geography that straddles the cold waters of the Atlantic Ocean.

Chairperson;

While archaeological artefacts, mummies and skeletons may repose in museums to remind us of the rich legacy of our ancient thinkers and visionaries, we, the living, owe it to the present and the future generations, to employ the "true vigour" which resides in our heads.

Our minds are now indeed free to give rein to our own creative possibilities of planting seeds to nurture the flowering blooms of our nations. Today, Chileans and South Africans are free - united in our diversity. Cries of freedom ring across our democracies.

Yet, we are learning all too well that our struggle for freedom and democracy is an eternal golden fibre woven in the tapestry of ideas by visionaries who came before us - thinkers and architects of new plans, new drawings, new roadmaps for our social contracts - thinkers such as the esteemed conclave of intellectuals, politicians, and civil society we have here today.

The poor and those marginalised - women, the youth, the elderly, people with disabilities also have clear ideas of what they want and desire. Are we able to draw from these rich fountains so as to enrich our ideas and ourselves!

Further, for governments, the central issue, among others, is how we devise practical programmes of action and manage our economies and our finite coffers for the benefit of those who gave us the mandate to do so. This is why governments and nations form bilateral and regional alliances such as the Community of South American Nations and the African Union so as to co-operate on areas of mutual benefit and concern.

Similarly, universities and the intelligentsia and all our social partners have a concomitant responsibility to join hands between themselves and with governments and the rest of civil society to build a better world.

A distinguished naturalised son of Chile, Ariel Dorfman poses several questions about Chile which have similar resonance for us all, when he anguished over a burning question in his book, *Heading South, Looking North*: "Two hundred years ago before I arrived on the shores of [Chile] and wondered how so much bounty could produce so much suffering, a Chilean named Jose Cos de Iribari had asked a similar question even before independence had been gained from Spain: How is it possible that, in the midst of the lavishness and splendour ..," most of the population was "groaning under the yoke of poverty, misery and the vices which are their inevitable consequences"?

(Extracted from Dorfman, A., *Heading South, Looking North* (Hodder and Stoughton, London: 1998, p. 126) For Dorfman, this remained a burning question as to why there continued to be in the nineties "social injustice, educational and technological stagnation, a scandalous disparity between the means and lifestyle of a small oligarchy and those of the vast impoverished nation."

Necessarily that "scandalous disparity" has to be overcome across the developing world in all spheres of life. Yet, the structural fault in the global economy means that the few are able to dictate to the rest of humanity terms and conditions of economic engagement in a manner inimical to this majority.

The economist, Joseph Stiglitz was frank when he wrote in his book, *'The Roaring Nineties'*, that:

"America pushed the ideology of the free market and tried hard to get access for U.S. companies overseas. In doing so, we in the Clinton administration too often put aside the kinds of principles for which we should have stood. We did not think about the impact of our policies on the poor in the developing countries, but on job creation in America. We believed in liberalising capital markets but didn't think about how it might lead to greater global instability. We thought more about what America might gain in the short run from hard bargaining - and how that in turn might enhance the administration's standing - than we did about how perceptions of unfairness and hypocrisy might in the long run set back America's interests." (P204, *the Roaring Nineties*, Published by Penguin Group, 2003.)

A better response to this disproportionate power is the strengthening of the multilateral system of government and for developing nations like Chile and South Africa, as well as our respective regional bodies, to strengthen our relations and collaborate on all matters that would benefit the poor.  
Chairperson;

We are very happy to be among the people of Chile because among other things, it is the Chileans who inspired us into looking at the best ways of healing the divisions of our own traumatic past. This led to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa. We followed this example because the courageous Chilean people know and knew only too well the psychological trauma of that tragedy of 11 September 1973 as well as subsequent abuses that scarred this beautiful country.

Commonsense also dictates that we need to transform how we govern ourselves at a global level as well as nationally. Again, the distinguished Nobel Laureate in Economics, Professor Joseph Stiglitz has urged the nations of the world to find new ways to reform global governance. He states: "Unfortunately, we have no world government, accountable to the people of every country, to oversee the globalization process in a fashion comparable to the way national governments guided the nationalization process. Instead, we have a system that might be called global governance without global government, one in which a few institutions - the World Bank, the IMF, the WTO - and a few players - the finance, commerce, and trade ministries, closely linked to certain financial and commercial interests - dominate the scene."

(Stiglitz, J., *Globalization and Its Discontents* (Penguin, London: 2002, pp. 21-22). For globalisation and a global market to thrive, Stiglitz urges a united and collective voice in the global decision-making process so that "growth is not only more sustainable and less volatile but the fruits of this growth are more equitably shared."

And we are not alone in our quest for equitable sustainable development. Like-minded leaders of the North are now coming up with their own vision on how to eradicate poverty and give hope to billions of marginalised people.

And this is what Pablo Neruda means when he draws inspiration from the French poet, Rimbaud in his Nobel Lecture and says, "There is no such thing as a lone struggle, no such thing as a lone hope. In every human being are combined the most distant epochs, passivity, mistakes, sufferings, the pressing urgencies of our own time, the pace of history."

Indeed, if we are to succeed, Pablo Neruda implores us, in the memory of Rimbaud, the Visionary: "only with a burning patience can we conquer the splendid City which will give light, justice and dignity to all mankind."

And it is this burning patience and quest for new ideas, which will surely renew our vigour and our minds to reach out for the infinite possibilities awaiting us.

Muchas gracias.

Thank you.