Mary Robinson

Human Rights and Ethical Globalization

JOAN B. KROC INSTITUTE FOR PEACE & JUSTICE

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CONTENTS

Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice 4

Joan B. Kroc Distinguished Lecture Series 6

Biography of Mary Robinson 10

Interview with Mary Robinson by Lilia Velasquez 12

Introduction by Sister Barbara Quinn 34

Lecture - *Human Rights and Ethical Globalization* 39

Questions and Answers 56

Related Resources 70

About the University of San Diego 76
The mission of the Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice (IPJ) is to foster peace, cultivate justice and create a safer world. Through education, research and peacemaking activities, the IPJ offers programs that advance scholarship and practice in conflict resolution and human rights. The Institute for Peace & Justice, located at the University of San Diego, draws upon Catholic social teaching that sees peace as inseparable from justice and acts to prevent and resolve conflicts that threaten local, national and international peace. The IPJ was established in 2000 through a generous gift from the late Joan B. Kroc to the University of San Diego to create an institute for the study and practice of peace and justice. Programming began in early 2001 and the building was dedicated in December 2001 with a conference, “Peacemaking with Justice: Policy for the 21st Century.”

The Institute for Peace & Justice strives, in Joan B. Kroc’s words, to “not only talk about peace, but to make peace.” The IPJ offers its services to parties in conflict to provide mediation and facilitation, assessments, training and consultations. It advances peace with justice through work with members of civil society in zones of conflict and has a focus on mainstreaming women in peace processes.

The Women PeaceMakers Program brings into residence at the IPJ women who have been actively engaged in peacemaking in conflict areas around the world to document their stories, share experiences with others working in peacemaking, and allow time for reflection on their work.

A Master’s Program in Peace & Justice Studies trains future leaders in the field and will be expanded into the Joan B. Kroc School of Peace Studies, supported by a $50 million endowment from the estate of Mrs. Kroc.

WorldLink, a year-round educational program for high school students from San Diego and Baja California connects youth to global affairs.

Country programs, such as the Nepal project, offer wide-ranging conflict assessments, mediation and conflict resolution training workshops.

Community outreach includes speakers, films, art and opportunities for discussion between community members, academics and practitioners on issues of peace and social justice, as well as dialogue with national and international leaders in government, non-governmental organizations and the military.
JOAN B. KROC DISTINGUISHED LECTURE SERIES

Endowed in 2003 by a generous gift to the Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice from the late Joan Kroc, philanthropist and international peace proponent, the Joan B. Kroc Distinguished Lecture Series is a forum for high-level national and international leaders and policy makers to share their knowledge and perspectives on issues related to peace and justice. The goal of the series is to deepen understanding of how to prevent and resolve conflict and promote peace with justice.

The Distinguished Lecture Series offers the community at large an opportunity to engage with leaders who are working to forge new dialogues with parties in conflict and who seek to answer the question of how to create an enduring peace for tomorrow. The series, which is held at the Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice at the University of San Diego, examines new developments in the search for effective tools to prevent and resolve conflict while protecting human rights and ensuring social justice.
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*The New Nuclear Danger*

October 15, 2003  Richard J. Goldstone  
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U.S. Department of State  
*Conflict, Gender and Human Rights: Lessons Learned from the Field*

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United States Marine Corps (retired)  
*From the Battlefield to the Negotiating Table: Preventing Deadly Conflict*

November 4, 2004  Hanan Ashrawi, Ph.D.  
Secretary General – Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy  
*Concept, Context and Process in Peacemaking: The Palestinian-Israeli Experience*
BIOGRAPHY OF MARY ROBINSON

Mary Robinson, the first woman President of Ireland and more recently United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (1997-2002), has spent most of her life as a human rights advocate. As a woman politician who put her humanity very much at the forefront of her politics, she now chairs the Council of Women World Leaders and is a member of the Global Commission on International Migration. President Robinson is also leading the Ethical Globalization Initiative (EGI), which is based in New York and supported by a partnership of the Aspen Institute, Columbia University (where she is a professor of practice) and the Swiss-based International Council on Human Rights Policy. Its goal is to bring the norms and standards of human rights into the globalization process and to support capacity building in good governance in developing countries.

As an academic, legislator and barrister, Robinson has always sought to use law as an instrument for social change, arguing landmark cases before the European Court of Human Rights as well as in the Irish courts and the European Court in Luxembourg. In 1988, Mary Robinson and her husband, Nicholas Robinson, founded the Irish Centre for European Law at the University of Dublin, and since 1998, she has been Chancellor of the University.

As president of Ireland, Mary Robinson made inclusiveness a hallmark during her widely-praised tenure. She used her office not only for the betterment of marginalized groups within Ireland, but also to draw attention to global crises. She was the first head of state to visit famine-stricken Somalia in 1992, and also the first to go to Rwanda in the aftermath of the genocide there. Drawing on Ireland’s own history of colonialism and famine, she articulated a special relationship between Ireland and developing countries, particularly in Africa. Her humanitarian efforts as president, her background in human rights law, and her uncompromising pursuit of justice and equality made her a prime candidate for the position of United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

The recipient of numerous honors and awards, including the 1999 J. William Fulbright Prize for International Understanding, President Robinson is a member of the Royal Irish Academy and the American Philosophical Society and is Honorary President of Oxfam International, as well as Penal Reform International. She is also a member of the Club of Madrid, a group of former heads of state and government.

President Robinson was educated at the University of Dublin (Trinity College), King’s Inns Dublin, and Harvard Law School, to which she won a fellowship in 1967. She holds honorary doctorates from over 40 universities around the world, including Harvard, Yale, Brown, Columbia, Oxford, Cambridge, London and Edinburgh.
INTERVIEW WITH MARY ROBINSON

The following is an edited transcript of an interview with Mary Robinson, conducted by Lilia Velasquez on March 31, 2005, at the Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice.

MR=Mary Robinson
LV=Lilia Velasquez

LV: You have four brothers, right?

MR: I use that as an explanation of why I was always interested in human rights.

LV: What was it like growing up as the only girl in a home with four boys?

MR: I didn’t realize it at the time, but I think I was very lucky because both our parents were doctors, and in some ways I was always made aware that I had all the possibilities my brothers had. Whatever I wanted to do, there was no difference. And my brothers did quite a lot of housework, so I think it was an advantage at that time to feel equal in the family.

LV: So you were not overly protected by your parents?

MR: No. My brothers naturally thought I was spoiled.

LV: Of course, you were the only girl; that’s understandable. You have stated in some of your interviews, Ms. Robinson, that your paternal grandfather influenced your decision to become a lawyer. What is it about the work he did that inspired you to become a lawyer and also to use the law as an instrument for social justice?

MR: As a lawyer in the west of Ireland, he had taken cases for the small guy—for the peasant against the landlord—and he was very interested in justice. By the time I was interested in talking to him, aged about ten, he had retired because of ill health. So he had time to talk; but like a number of men of that generation, he didn’t know how to talk to a child. So he talked to me as an adult—and it was intoxicating. We would have these long discussions about justice and about how important law could be because it was a sort of infrastructure. And then I’d go home to my parents and they would treat me like a ten-year-old. But I did find those conversations very influential.

LV: So did you actually participate? Did he share with you the cases he was handling?

MR: Yes. I think he used his experience to talk more widely about issues of justice and about my possible future, etc. And he was very focused on issues of equality. He was quite an old-fashioned lawyer. There was that really strong sense of justice and fairness, and having the courage to take cases. He often spoke about courage.

LV: I understand he was actually representing poor tenants at one point?

MR: Yes, that’s right.

LV: And those are not popular causes.

MR: No, not really. So he did have a great influence. And while I was sitting and talking with him, books would arrive at the door because he was a great reader. These would be books that he would have ordered. That brought home to me the importance of the library and of reading. I was very influenced in different ways.

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1. Lilia Velasquez, an attorney in private practice since 1985, is a certified specialist in Immigration and Nationality Law. She is also an Adjunct Professor at California Western School of Law, and the consulting attorney in Immigration Law for the Mexican Consulate in San Diego. Velasquez was a member of a Legal Study Delegation to both the Soviet Union and China, and has traveled on human rights missions to South Africa, Israel and Palestine, Guatemala, Cuba, Iraq, the former Yugoslavia, Afghanistan and Nepal.
LV: How old were you when you decided you were going to pursue a legal career?

MR: Quite early on. I think I was committed to making the world a fairer place at a very early stage. I thought, it must be the brothers.

LV: Yes. You wanted to fight for yourself. You don’t come from a political family?

MR: No, and so when I studied at Harvard I think that I was infected by the interest in my contemporaries at Harvard, in making a change and taking responsibility. When I came back to Ireland, I started to practice at the Irish Bar. I started to teach and became a professor of constitutional criminal law at an early age. And I remember talking to my father about the fact that I was being persuaded to go forward for the senate. He was quite shocked. He said, “Well, you know, this isn’t something we’ve done in our family.” So it wasn’t normal.

LV: How many times did you run for office?

MR: Well, after the first time—when I surprised the political world I think by being elected—I was then re-elected, I think about six or seven times. I have lost count now, but for 20 years anyway.

LV: I read in one of your interviews that you did not consider yourself at first to be a good politician.

MR: I think I was always somebody more interested in issues, somebody interested in education, in opening up Irish society, in reaching out to create conditions of peace and justice in Northern Ireland, and in international development issues. I stood twice for the lower house, the more political chamber, and was not elected. But I was elected to the Dublin City Council, which was a great learning curve for me, but I knew in my heart it wasn’t really the political arena that I was best equipped for.

LV: How did you develop those leadership skills or those political skills that eventually enabled you to convince the Irish people that you would be the right person to become the first woman president of Ireland?

MR: Well, I had been fortunate in practicing and teaching law, and then being involved in joining with others in the legislature and helping to make or refine laws. I gained increasing confidence because I’m quite a shy person inside. I hadn’t ever wanted or even thought about becoming president because the presidency in Ireland is a non-executive role which had, up to that point, been a very grand office with a lot of pomp and circumstance. It was viewed as important in representing Ireland abroad, receiving the credentials of ambassadors, and having certain constitutional roles; but the real power, the political power, was with the Irish Prime Minister, the Taoiseach, and the government. So the first time I thought about it was when I was asked by the Irish Labor party, which I had belonged to for about nine of those 20 years, and I left because I had taken a stand on principle—but I hadn’t fallen out personally with the party. I’d gone back to being an Independent so I could speak about the need for a more balanced Anglo-Irish agreement that gave more space to Protestant Unionists. This was not a very popular position, but one I felt very strongly about.

So when the Irish Labor party approached me through its former attorney general, I was both surprised and, initially, somewhat dismayed in the sense that I had a very exciting life as a lawyer. I had joint chambers in London. I was taking human rights cases to Strasbourg and Luxembourg. I was working with my husband at the Centre for Human Rights, or [Irish] Centre for European Law really. We were preparing sectors of the wider Irish economy for the implications of membership in the European Union: business, trade unions, farmers, etc. I loved the life. And we had three young children and so on. But when I thought about it, I was initially aware that this was an underdeveloped office, which under the constitution had quite a lot of capacity to influence a

2 The Taoiseach is the Prime Minister, or Head of the Irish Government.
LV: What did you have to do during your campaign? Did you hold meetings at city hall? Did you go door to door? Just how did you get the word out to the people that you were the right person?

MR: Because there is universal suffrage, it gave me an opportunity to travel extensively throughout Ireland to go to small places—fishing villages, the inner city and the islands—and to talk about the potential for somebody to play a role that was complimentary to the power exercised by government, but had more of a moral authority role that could represent Ireland in a different way. This role could link with the way in which, in towns and villages, people were involved in their own self-development; it could give that acknowledgement and recognition.

LV: There seems to be, at least in this country, a lack of women participating in political offices and high level positions. What advice would you give women who wish to pursue a political career? What is it like?

MR: I would very much encourage women to become more involved; society needs that. We need a good balance, but it helps to recognize that it can be quite tough and that there is still an unfair sharing of burdens—or, not so much burdens, but home responsibilities. So being involved politically can mean long hours, a lot of travel, and a lot of being available at a political office for constituents. But it is really important that more and more women become involved and that our legislatures are more balanced. I saw that myself when I started. I think there were six women in the Irish Senate. And when it went up to about 13 of the 60, we were a critical mass in a different way. And the lower house also had more women, so we were able to prioritize issues like violence against women, reform of the Irish rape law, family planning and these sorts of areas that were really very important.

LV: Do you think it goes with the territory that if you do get elected to political office, it implies that family values, attention to your children and to your husband would have to be sacrificed to some extent?

MR: No, I don’t. I acknowledge that it’s a wonderful help to have a very supportive spouse.

LV: And you have that?

MR: I do. But I don’t believe that the way to do it is to neglect or somehow undervalue family life. On the contrary, it may mean that you have to convey to your children—as I certainly tried to convey to mine—that they are most important, but that you won’t necessarily be there all the time; but if ever they need you, you’ll be there for them. I think that’s the most important message.

LV: I cannot think of a greater role model that you could have than a mother who is the president of the country. Have you influenced your children to pursue political office? What are they doing now?

MR: In fact, our three young were very private and shy. It was quite a sacrifice in a way to be more public because I was going forward for election as president. For the first time they were photographed in a newspaper and you could tell by their not-smiling faces they weren’t very happy. So even while I was president we kept our family life as private as possible, which you can do in Ireland. And our young pursued their own careers in a way that I’m very happy about and I’m very proud of them. Our daughter is a lawyer and she’s now produced two lovely grandchildren—very young grandchildren. Our oldest son is an architect and has married a Spanish architect. And our youngest son is working in South Africa in a township on HIV and AIDS. He’s only 23 and I am really very proud of him.

LV: It clearly seems that you had a great influence on them?

MR: Well, I’m not sure. They also had a strong influence of a father who
was perhaps more relaxed about life than I am. I’m very committed and very driven, I suppose, by an urgent sense of a need to have a fairer world. He was a political cartoonist as well as a lawyer in his time, and so he would help us all to not be too serious.

LV: Were you ever the subject of any of his cartoons?

MR: I was indeed, yes; also, the subject of his critical voice, in a very helpful way. He would tell me the things I needed to hear but didn’t want to hear. And he would insist on me hearing him and that was always very valuable.

LV: Ms. Robinson, you have accomplished so much in your professional life. You have been a lawyer, you’ve advocated landmark cases, you’ve been a professor of law at a very young age, a senator for 20 years, president for seven, and the High Commissioner for Human Rights for five years. When you reflect on all the work you have done as a human rights advocate, what do you consider your greatest accomplishment, or the work that has had the greatest impact in human rights?

MR: In a way, I’ve been very lucky that my work seems to have been connected. When I was working as a barrister on human rights cases, I was also able to bring some of that into the senate as experience, or into my lectures. When I became president and was trying to develop the office of president, I was drawing on the experience that I had as a constitutional lawyer and on some of my human rights work in linking Ireland to developing countries and visiting places like Somalia and Rwanda. When I became High Commissioner for Human Rights, I was drawing on all of that and telling the stories to try to communicate.

And now I’m kind of gathering it all in working with colleagues and bringing human rights to a wider audience, making it relevant to trade and development, to issues of the right to health, tackling the pandemic of HIV and AIDS, and to issues of migration—which I believe is one of the most important subjects today; it’s the human face of globalization. But I just seem to be very fortunate. I don’t see my life as very successful. I see it as building blocks of further knowledge. And actually, I’ve made a lot of mistakes, or haven’t done as well as I would like to have done in many areas.

LV: You have stated in some of your speeches that being a woman can actually be an advantage. Women bring a new perspective, voice and vision into the political arena. Do you feel that it is because of those qualities and this unique vision that you brought to the presidency that you enjoy the highest popularity rate of any president?

MR: Well, certainly I did feel that it was important to me, and important to convey, that I felt I had the strength of being a woman—the first to be elected president, and now I’m succeeded by another woman president, Mary McAleese. And I think the popularity to some extent stems from the fact that it was a non-executive presidency. I had developed an office which before that had not been regarded as particularly relevant. It was up there, but not very relevant to people’s lives. And I was able to make it more relevant. That was why my work gained a lot of support.

LV: I would like to now ask you some questions about women’s rights. One of the down sides, or harms, of globalization, has been the increase of human traffic all over the world. It is now called a modern form of slavery that affects primarily women and children. It’s a billion dollar industry. Do you feel that the threat of potential economic sanctions is an effective tool in dealing with this global human rights problem? What would be a better incentive for countries to make every possible effort in the prevention, protection and then prosecution of the traffickers?

MR: Certainly when I became the High Commissioner of Human Rights, I was taken aback at the extent of trafficking. I met girls as young as seven, eight, or nine in countries like Cambodia and parts of Africa who had been...
trafficked, escaped from a brothel or who were working as slaves in the fields or in other areas. And I was aware from those who were involved at grassroots levels in dealing with the issue of trafficking that some of the measures taken actually punished even more the women and children—made them the victims even more.

So during my time I brought experts together and devised human rights guidelines for dealing with trafficking that emphasized the importance of insuring that those who were the victims were being treated as victims, and that they not be somehow doubly burdened by the fact that they were caught in the measures that were taken. I've seen instances where women were the ones ending up in prison, and those who were the traffickers got away. So it is an issue that has to be dealt with in a holistic way. There have to be measures of prevention. There has to be responsibility taken within regions where you have trafficking between countries. Countries can be receiving, but they can also be sending. And some of the sending countries, the rich countries, don't take responsibility for the fact that they're not sufficiently aware, and they are not taking measures against those who traffic. It is a big criminal issue and it has to be addressed with all the measures, including tracking money, which is done to counter drug trafficking and gun trafficking. It's of that order of criminality.

LV: What responsibility do the transit countries have? It has been an issue of, “Well, they're just passing through; this is not the destination,” and so they seem to feel that they really don't have that much responsibility.

MR: This is why I think that a regional approach is also very necessary because then you don't let any gaps appear in the overall approach of prevention, tracking the flow and taking the measures necessary. At the same time, they have to have regard for the safeguarding of victims and providing adequate, immediate support, help and reasonable choices for women as to what they want to do once they've been freed from trafficking.

LV: As a lawyer who represents victims of trafficking here in San Diego, there is tremendous frustration at the lack of prosecution. It is very, very difficult to prosecute traffickers in the United States. A great majority of the victims are undocumented, very vulnerable and very much afraid to come forward to testify against the trafficker. It's terrifying: they don't speak the language, it's a different culture and they have no documents. Do you feel that the international community is doing enough to rescue and rehabilitate victims of trafficking?

MR: No, for the kind of reasons that you've outlined—that is very much the pattern in so many countries, and quite often there's an economic reason behind it all. If a country is facing high unemployment and inflation, it's much more likely the women will be enticed by false promises of what they would be going to, be deprived of their papers or be undocumented from the beginning. This is an issue that hasn't received adequate attention. It's another reason why I feel that if we had more women in legislatures, and even city councils, the issue could be higher on the scales because it does affect very vulnerable women who are undocumented, poor and do not speak the language. They are terrified and very insecure. They don't want to go into a forum setting like a court and have to give evidence. It frightens them.

LV: Yes, in fact, sometimes they tell me they'd rather deal with the status quo than to face a court hearing. As a human rights activist you have been on the ground in many different countries and witnessed the horrible human rights abuses against women and children: rape, domestic violence and diseases such as AIDS. What do you consider to be the worst human rights violation in the world today? And what measures are being taken to address that issue?

MR: I used to get asked that question a lot by journalists when I was working for the United Nations, and after a year of going to some of the worst places, I found that I was answering in a way that surprised journalists. I would say the worst problem is absolute poverty because then you have no rights at all. It's very often linked to areas where you have conflict and where you have displacement of refugees, and, at the same time, if we really tackled the poverty, we would tackle a lot of the other problems as well.
When I was in Rwanda after the genocide and killing, it was clear that it was land congestion that allowed the hatred to build up between the Hutus and Tutsis. And to me, that's really the major focus. I find it intolerable that 30,000 children die every day from hunger or diarrhea or malaria, simply because they couldn't get a $5 treated bed net. There is no excuse for this. We have a world that can adequately provide for the core human rights. It became very important to me as High Commissioner to emphasize that human rights are not only civil and political rights, freedom from torture, the right to life, fair trials, freedom of expression, freedom of religion, but also the rights to food, safe water, health and education. Absolute poverty is a deprivation of the rights of dignity which we guaranteed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

LV: Do you think that the international community is increasingly responding to that need?

MR: I think it's interesting to look at our world today. I was struck by the response to the tsunami disaster because people identified. It was biblical. It affected the rich who had gone to be tourists in Thailand and Sri Lanka. It affected poor fishing villages. And the media covered it extensively. The outpouring of support—I'm President of Oxfam International, and Oxfam saw a 50 percent increase in applications to give and to become members. So it is possible in our world to tap into an individual generosity. But having said that, governments aren't living up to their commitments, either on the development side, fair trade or debt cancellation. The debt hanging over the very poor countries of the world is really shocking. They're paying out these millions of dollars of debt, and they can't afford teachers in the schools, or nurses in the health clinics in a country that's devastated by HIV and AIDS. This is a terrible unfairness and cruelty in our world.

LV: What is it going to take for the world to respond?

MR: I think it's going to take a mixture of things. We now have a shared global agenda since the Millennium Declaration of September 2000, when the largest gathering ever of the heads of state of governments put forward this declaration. They promised that they would make globalization work for all of the world's people.

LV: And wasn't a deadline of 15 years given?

MR: That's right, 2015. I talk a lot about the Millennium Development Goals to audiences in this country and to a certain extent in Europe, and I'm struck by the fact that more than 60 percent of the attendants put up their hands in responding that they'd never heard of the Millennium Development Goals. So we have a world agenda that has not been communicated. Governments are not actually taking this seriously enough; but I think that is changing because we had a review this year of the Millennium Development Goals. There's also a mobilization of people going on that I'm very interested in. There's a Global Call to Action against Poverty which was launched at the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre [Brazil] in January [2005], and endorsed at the World Economic Forum in Davos [Switzerland], where I was present with people like Bono and Kumi Naidoo from South Africa, who is head of CIVICUS. A very big linking of civil society groups, I think something like 150 million people, are now signing up to this Global Call to Action against Poverty, including faith-based groups and a wide range of civil society groups. And three times this year they're going to wear a white band to signify the need for change: before the G8 meeting in Scotland on the first of July, before the General Assembly on the 10th of September, and before the World Trade Organization's ministerial meeting in Hong Kong on the 10th of December. If there is a huge mobilization worldwide, then I think we will begin to see a political momentum. It will be a beginning. We need a world movement about the unfairness of our world.

4 The Millennium Declaration is a U.N. resolution that was passed by the General Assembly on 8 September 2000. See Related Resources for more information on the Millennium Development Goals.

5 The Global Call to Action against Poverty is discussed further in Ms. Robinson’s lecture. Also see Related Resources.

6 CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation, based in South Africa, is an alliance of over 1,000 international members committed to the strengthening of civil societies around the world.
LV: To raise the consciousness of every single individual.

MR: Yes.

LV: With the approval of Resolution 1325, the U.N. Security Council has given women all over the world a legal framework to promote women’s equal participation in peace and security processes. But implementing it—as is the case with any other instrument or declaration—and translating the resolution into reality has presented some major challenges. What do you think is a major obstacle and why aren’t we making the progress that we should be making now that we have this backing of Resolution 1325?

MR: First of all, it was important to get Resolution 1325 and to build on it. But implementation is always more difficult. There’s a reluctance to see women as actors for change in situations of conflict and situations of peacebuilding, even though when you’re there, women are the peacemakers. But when it comes to negotiations, it’s the men who are the visible people around the table. And again, it’s part of the power structure locally. So in order to fully tackle [the situation], you have to tackle local power structures. But we still don’t sufficiently take seriously the violence against women. We need to have zero tolerance of violence against women internationally, and that’s going to take a major cultural change because it’s so endemic and present at all levels of society. Domestic violence is still a huge problem. But women are treated in a way that reflects our whole cultural approach: they don’t have property rights, if a man becomes infected with HIV and AIDS, it’s said to be the woman’s fault. So it is very important that we have that resolution to build on, that we can insist in peace discussions that the role of women is recognized and women are at the table, and that the work that has been done by women in peacebuilding gets the recognition it deserves, and so on.

LV: Do you think in some of the parts of the world men are more willing to relinquish the power and share it with women equally and to be at the negotiating table? What are the leading countries that have really taken to heart Resolution 1325?

MR: I’m not sure that I can answer that one accurately. A country like Rwanda now sees the participation of women. It has the largest number of women in parliament in the world, but there is the sad reality that there are so many widows, and it’s a country that’s been devastated by the genocidal killing. But it does reflect, now, a strong participation by women at all levels. In East Timor, I was struck by the desire of women for more participation. And, in some respects, they were participating. I remember attending a village hearing chaired by a woman regional commissioner, which was under their justice and peace commission. It was a hearing that listened to three perpetrators, three young men. And eventually, it readmitted them to the village. I thought it was very good and it was a woman presiding over that, with male elders beside her. So, piece by piece, it is making a difference.

LV: I think it’s just the impatience that we all have. You are the founder and the Executive Director of the Ethical Globalization Initiative which, as I understand, works to see that corporations adhere to human rights standards, and brings norms and standards of human rights into the globalization process. What success has the Ethical Globalization Initiative had so far and what challenges do you see ahead of you?

MR: First of all, when we began and called the initiative the Ethical Globalization Initiative, my Irish friends said that was a very highfalutin title for a small initiative. So my response was to lengthen the title. Now it’s called Realizing Rights: the Ethical Globalization Initiative. And “Realizing Rights” actually explains what we’re doing. What we’re saying is that everyone in the world has a birthright because of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. Under Article 29, everyone owes duties to the community. So we’re bringing that into areas

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7 U.N. Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, was adopted in 2000. See Related Resources.

8 The Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation in East Timor.
LV: I believe that also one of the arguments you have made is that as corporations own more resources and exert more power in the world, they also have to share in their human rights responsibilities. Do you find that those large corporations see your initiative as a threat? Are they receptive to listening to what you have to say? What is their perception of the Globalization Initiative?

MR: Well, certainly I feel the international human rights system was intended to prevent abuse of power and to protect individuals because they have rights. But in our modern globalizing world, power has shifted to an extent. We still make it very clear that governments have the primary responsibility for the protection and promotion of human rights; but corporations, because they have additional power, have a responsibility within their sphere of influence. And a lot of work is being done now to define what the appropriate responsibility of large corporations is, and I have supported work that was carried out by the Sub-Commission on [the Promotion and Protection of] Human Rights of the United Nations to draft what are called the U.N. Norms and Responsibilities of Transnational Corporations and Other Business [Enterprises]. They are being debated currently in the Commission on Human Rights.

My former office did a study during the last year of these norms, together with other standards of corporate responsibility, like the OECD [Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development] guidelines and other measures. I chair a Business Leaders Initiative on Human Rights which involves ten major corporations: Hewlett-Packard, Gap, Barclays Bank, ABB, Novartis, Statoil and others, and they are prepared as corporations to test and practice these norms and see what the implications are. Their experience is very positive, so we have a kind of business test case going on. And the reason I’m working closely with business in this is because I am aware that business can either be a force for good or it can seriously violate human rights, so it’s necessary to engage them.
LV: Do you feel that corporations actually see the benefit—not only through public image or goodwill, but even in acquiring a larger share—of having a human rights-friendly label?

MR: I do, and a good example is the Gap, in fact. About 18 months ago, the Gap produced a social report in which they acknowledged that there were problems of exploitive labor conditions in the supply chain to the Gap, and when they published this, they felt they would get terrible criticism. But, in fact, human rights NGOs, said, “Good, the Gap is making progress.” For a response, this is really the way to go. So they made a lot of changes in their approach and checks and balances, and then they asked to join this initiative in order to work with other corporations to introduce into the company a culture of caring about human rights issues and becoming familiar with them. And to me, that’s part of what we have to do.

We have to encourage corporations to test in practice, and then they will find, I believe, more and more that it can work. I’m not naive. I know that there is a lot of public relations work attached, and I know that corporations are very good at telling people about their philanthropic work and then selling drugs at high prices to very poor families who can’t afford them and so on. But we have no choice in our globalizing world. So many services have been privatized, even prison services—these are issues which I find very disturbing. I believe that there are public goods that should, to a certain extent, stay within the publicly accountable domain. But it’s difficult to make corporations accountable in the same way that a government or a local authority can be accountable if there’s a failure to provide services in an appropriate way.

LV: Well, I think that the general perception is that by privatizing services like the jails and health care, it shifts the responsibility away from the government.

MR: Yes, and that’s a big challenge from the human rights perspective. And that’s why we have to get an agreed standard. We also need the international institutions to take human rights very seriously. I’m having a lot of discussions with the World Bank, for example, because I believe that in tackling poverty, the more they can do it in what we call a “rights-based way,” the more it will actually be sustainable. Instead of dealing with people’s needs for food and shelter, if people have rights, then they also have a right to participate in decisions affecting them. It’s a whole different way of approaching it. And I’m very supportive of Hernando de Soto’s approach of ensuring that poor people are able to use their assets by having a sort of legal basis for the property that they own, so they can negotiate as others do with their property. All of these are measures of empowerment which interest me very much.

LV: Reed Brody, who was the Advocacy Director of Human Rights Watch, once said about you, “Mary Robinson paid the price for her willingness to stand up to powerful governments’ violations of human rights.” What price do you think you have paid?

MR: What Reed was referring to, I think, was the fact that I had been critical of the United States in the aftermath of the terrible attacks in this country on the 11th of September, 2001. I found it was a lonely responsibility during that first year after these terrible attacks because there was silence about what was taking place: the lack of adherence to the Geneva Conventions, and later Guantanamo Bay, about the misuse of the Alien’s Law in this country, and the PATRIOT Act not upholding the commitments that the United States had made under this national covenant on some of the political rights. So I felt it was necessary to address these issues. I had a mandate that required me to do it in fact.

But also, I was aware that because of the fact that the United States has been looked to as a leader in human rights, people felt the standards had changed and other countries were copying, but without the safeguards the United States has of independent courts and independent NGOs, like Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International and others. So when I was raising with other countries...

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10 Hernando de Soto founded the Institute for Liberty and Democracy in the early 1980s. The work of ILD includes the reformation of the property system in de Soto’s native Peru, and has since expanded globally. See Related Resources.

11 Brody made this statement upon Robinson’s announcement in March of 2002 that she would not seek a renewal as the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights when her term ended in September of that year. See http://hrw.org/english/docs/2002/03/18/global3804.htm.
the fact that they had extended their security law in a way that clamped down on the political opposition of freedom of the press, they would say, “Well, don’t you know the standards have changed?” I would say, “No, they have not. I’m in charge and the standards remain the same.” And they said, “Well, look at the United States.”

I was aware that it was giving rise to strong criticism of me by certain members of the Bush Administration. And I had agreed to serve a further year after my first term, because when I initially said I wouldn’t serve a second term, there was quite an outcry from grassroots human rights people. So my family agreed that I would serve another year, but during that year the terrible attacks occurred. So I indicated to the Secretary-General that I would be prepared, if necessary, to stay on for the further three years; in other words, complete that second term. It was clear that human rights were under siege, under attack, and when I conveyed that, the Secretary-General consulted me that it was clear that the United States would not support it. I completed the five years and handed over—in a very supportive way—to Sergio Vieira de Mello, who was sadly killed subsequently in Iraq. I’m very loyal to the office and very supportive of the role of the United Nations in human rights. I was prepared to speak out and criticize the largest, most powerful country, and I was able to support the integrity of international human rights—to me that was the most important thing. It’s a system where at least the High Commissioner cannot have double standards. And I feel that was very important.

LV: Well, certainly you have to be a role model of integrity and principles.

MR: There is nothing more important. That’s why I hope that the United States will get back to its position of being a leader in this area. I attended a very important conference in Madrid because I’m Vice President of the Club of Madrid, which is the club of former presidents and prime ministers. They hosted a major conference involving a number of current heads of state and government, and the new Attorney General, Mr. [Alberto] Gonzales was there on behalf of the United States. It involved about 1,200 participants and experts from throughout the world looking at how to tackle issues of security while upholding the rule of law and human rights. And the Madrid agenda is very strong on this. I hope that it will influence a better way for democracies. I’ve talked about democracies working closely together to be very firm in tackling terrorism and promoting human security, but also upholding standards of human rights.

LV: There has been terrible consternation here by human rights activists and immigration lawyers that with the PATRIOT Act—the rumor on the street was that it has everything in it except the Constitution—the United States has indeed sacrificed civil liberties in the name of national security. I think the key issue is how Congress really expects to reach that delicate balance in which it is protecting our national security, and at the same time, not sacrificing individual liberties.

MR: This was very much the issue discussed in Madrid, and it was really encouraging that experts from around the world on both security sides were very experienced, like former chiefs of police and security forces. And the strongest message was that democracies must remember what they are really about. They must be very firm and indeed, take more measures of cooperation on tackling the money, working together and being very firm on security, as I said, but also on upholding human rights.

LV: I have two very brief questions. Kofi Annan’s report last week recommends that the Commission for Human Rights be replaced with a Human Rights Council. What would this new structure mean? Is it good for human rights? Is it bad for human rights? Would it mean more resources for human rights? What impact do you think this change would have if, in fact, the change goes through?

MR: It’s clear from the report that the Secretary-General means it to enhance human rights and the protection of human rights at the U.N. level. I’m glad that the need to reform the Commission for Human Rights is fully
acknowledged. I think a Human Rights Council that is seriously seen as a lead body on human rights would be a great advance. And another part of the report recommends much more resources to the Office of High Commissioner. I had been looking for that during my five years, and I hope that my now successor, Justice Louise Arbour, will benefit from better resources and better capacity within the office.

LV: So you feel it will be a positive change?

MR: I think it will be very positive.

LV: Today, the U.S. agreed for the ICC [International Criminal Court] to handle the case of Darfur in Sudan. Do you think the U.S. will come around; what do you think it will take for the U.S. to ratify the Rome Statute?¹³

MR: I think it’s very important that the egregious human rights violations in Darfur now be referred to the International Criminal Court. That is absolutely vital because it really will have an impact on the ground and may save a number of lives. And I hope that this step will bring home to the United States the importance of the International Criminal Court. As High Commissioner, I welcomed it as the great human rights advance of this century.

We have an International Criminal Court so that the worst despots and tyrants know that they can run, but they cannot hide, and that ultimately, they must be brought before the International Criminal Court. So I hope that this will cause a re-think, and that it will be appreciated that there are safeguards that would prevent some of the concerns of the United States, concerns that those serving in their armies would be brought before the International Criminal Court. It’s a court of second resort, so if the courts of the country are working, then they have nothing to fear from the International Criminal Court.

LV: Just briefly, President Robinson, I believe about a year ago you became a grandmother?

MR: That’s right. I’ve actually become a grandmother for a second time.

LV: You said in one interview that it was the birth of your grandchild that rekindled the fire in you to make this a better world. What kind of world would you like to hand down to your granddaughter?

MR: I was already very committed to trying to have a fairer world, but when my grandson was born—the granddaughter was born earlier this month—I was surprised internally at how fired up I became. I think it’s that urgency. It’s back to what I was saying earlier: to me it’s intolerable that 30,000 children die every day unnecessarily. I’ve seen children die of hunger in the arms of their parents at feeding stations. I’ve seen children die of diarrhea in refugee camps. I’ve seen women die in childbirth because there is nobody there to do the simplest things to prevent the unnecessary death of a young mother. I think that feeling an inner joy at my own grandchildren, it’s not so much that the commitment is rekindled, but it’s like a supercharge.

The world I want to see is very simple. It’s a fairer world. It’s a world where Mozambique can trade competitively in a product it is competitive in, like sugar. And that those women I saw in the village will have the cash to buy the bare necessities for their families, and won’t be dependent on the development culture of richer countries providing development aid. That will be needed for awhile, but we need a world where the vision of Eleanor Roosevelt is fulfilled and human rights do matter “in small places, close to home.”¹⁴ And they matter also in the boardrooms of major national and transnational corporations, in the corridors of the U.N., the World Bank, and everywhere that is part of a culture and of the 21st century.

¹³ The ICC entered into force in July of 2002, after 60 countries had ratified the Rome Statute establishing the Court.

¹⁴ Quote from Roosevelt’s March 1958 speech before the United Nations. See Related Resources.
INTRODUCTION BY SISTER BARBARA QUINN, DIRECTOR OF THE CENTER FOR CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY, UNIVERSITY OF SAN DIEGO

Good evening. I owe the honor of introducing President Mary Robinson tonight to a connection that perhaps most of you are not aware of. In her earliest years, President Robinson displayed the good sense, vision and wisdom that characterize her remarkable career today: she enrolled in a school run by my community, the Religious of the Sacred Heart. She tells a story about how she found her way to our school, Mount Anvîl in Dublin. Sandwiched between two older brothers and two younger brothers—a fact she attributes to her early interest in human rights—this ten-year-old couldn’t wait for her next birthday, to follow in the footsteps of her two older brothers, who had gone off to a boarding school. One day as she was climbing a tree in her yard, her grandfather spotted her through the greenery above. Appalled at her unladylike behavior, he shouted for her to come down. Mary went up higher. Within minutes her grandfather stood before Mary’s parents with the emphatic declaration that there would be no waiting for her 11th birthday. She was to go to boarding school now.

Her classmates knew her well. As they affectionately remembered her days at Mount Anvîl on the occasion of her 50th birthday, said one, “Mary did not like being told what to do.” And yet another remembered that “she was so good at everything, it used to drive us mad.” With that kind of profile, it is no wonder that 700-some people have flocked here tonight to hear her.

On a more serious note, there is a poem by President Robinson’s friend, poet and scholar Eavan Boland, which offers us an insight I think, into the deeper layers of her character and her unswerving commitment to human rights. It is entitled, “The Emigrant Irish”:

Like oil lamps, we put them out the back —
of our houses, of our minds. We had lights
better than, newer than and then
a time came, this time and now
we need them. Their dread, makeshift example:

they would have thrived on our necessities.
What they survived we could not even live.
By their lights now it is time to
imagine how they stood there, what they stood with,
that their possessions may become our power:
Cardboard. Iron. Their hardships parcelled in them.
Patience. Fortitude. Long-suffering
in the bruise-colored dusk of the New World.

And all the old songs. And nothing to lose.15

“…now it is time to/imagine how they stood there, what they stood with./that their possessions may become our power”. I cannot help but think

15 See Related Resources.
that this humble and reverent attitude toward the gifts of those too often considered the outcast, the vulnerable and the poor, is the spirit that enabled President Robinson to be a bridge builder between rich and impoverished, between governments and corporations and those who are affected by their decisions, and between diverse cultures that span our globe.

As the first woman president of Ireland, she visited not only the powerful in Dublin, but the people in the inner city and on the islands. And she dressed in appropriate finery for all, to signal her respect for each person, no matter their position in life. Her memory of the great famine suffered by her own people empowered her to be the first head of state to visit Somalia and Rwanda after their crises, underlining the imperative that developed nations partner with nations in dire need. She was a people’s president. As U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights, she embodied the spirit expressed by one of her cherished models, Eleanor Roosevelt, who said that if human rights are to matter, they must matter “in small places, close to home.”

Her charge to integrate human rights concerns in all the activities of the United Nations would be daunting at the least were it not for her uncommon gift of seeing behind every project and policy the faces of real people in “small places, close to home.” And now, as the founder and Director of Realizing Rights: the Ethical Globalization Initiative, begun in 2002, President Robinson has given birth to yet another vision of hope. EGI has taken as its broad mandate a three-fold challenge: to “harness civil society, government, business and economic forums to build awareness for [their] select issues of concern”; to “facilitate dialogues and relationships between decision makers and key stakeholders, particularly those most marginalized, in order to arrive at more transparent, ethical and responsible policies and joint actions to achieve changes”; and finally, to “develop specific policy recommendations and seek to communicate [their] findings through key decision makers to the wider public.”

Who of us would dare to attempt such a program but Mary, who like an oil lamp in the imagery of the Irish emigrant, beams “patience”, “fortitude”, and “long-suffering/in the bruise-colored dusk” of our world—one who has “nothing to lose.” Tonight we welcome a valiant woman described so poignantly in the Book of Proverbs. She finds her labor well worthwhile. Her lamp does not go out at night. She holds out her hand to the poor, she opens her arms to the needy. She is clothed in strength and dignity. She can laugh at the days to come. When she opens her mouth, she does so wisely. On her tongue is kindly instruction. Give her a share in what her hands have worked for, and let her works praise her at the city gates. With gratitude, great respect and genuine esteem, President Robinson, we welcome you at our city gates.

16 Taken from the website of EGI. See Related Resources.

17 Paraphrase of Proverbs 31:10-31
Human Rights and Ethical Globalization

Mary Robinson
Good evening, President Mary Lyons, ladies and gentlemen. It's a very real pleasure to be here and to make personal contact with the Joan Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice. And I must say I very much appreciated the warm welcome and the very kind words of welcome introducing me here this evening. It's good to see so many of you and to know that there are others I can't see, who are also listening in. And the bonus was you put on this Santa Ana, as I understand it, to greet me. I was afraid when I heard about the developing relations with Ireland that you might try and make me feel at home with a shower or something when I arrived, but happily not.

I am particularly pleased to learn more of the work of the Joan Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice. I heard about the WorldLink Program, the outreach for young people, earlier this evening. And I know a good deal of emphasis here is on women's roles as actors for peace, which we are increasingly recognizing. Peace and justice are the cornerstones of a more ethical, of a more values-led, globalization. And human rights I believe provide the universal language that can make such a difference, as Eleanor Roosevelt has been quoted, “in small places, close to home.” But how can we achieve a world of peace and justice when the reality is that global inequalities divide us so starkly?

I wanted to put a human face on some of those inequalities by describing briefly two visits that I made recently—visits that were made in order to make human rights relevant to people's lives. Earlier this month, I went to Mozambique. I joined my colleagues from Oxfam there; I serve as Honorary President of Oxfam International. I went to a small village in a part of Mozambique which has very poor land, but grows sugar cane very well. I went to a local village and the women greeted me with a song in their local language, Changana. They wore colorful head scarves. There were many young children, some of them with babies on their knees. And beyond them in the shade of trees, I could see the fields of sugar cane, taller than any man.

They finished singing and began to ask me what I was going to do about the terrible difficulties they were having because of the insecure price of the sugar they were producing. They had some access to the market of the European Union, but they had learned that the European Union, because of a WTO [World Trade Organization] case against them, was going to change their sugar management, change the system of subsidies which already had affected the world price. And they were pleading for more time in order to help develop the sugar cane and factory production nearby, which could be very competitive. And it was brought home to me that in Mozambique it's possible to produce a very good quality of sugar at a much lower price than, for example, in my native Ireland, where the sugar produced was sugar beet, as it was in the rest of Europe. I was faced with a very tangible reality: that Europe must recognize that very poor countries, like Mozambique, can be competitive. And we're also talking about other countries, like Malawi, Zambia and Ethiopia—what we call least-developed countries—that could make a better life through the products that they can offer competitively in the world market, if they get a fair chance.

A few months earlier, in early December, I was in Mali in West Africa. This time I was looking at the product of cotton. I went again to a village and out into the cotton fields, where I saw women—and it was all women—picking the cotton: bending down and picking it. And under the shade, or not quite the shade of the tree, I saw babies lying in a ditch. And older children were minding the toddlers and the babies because the women couldn't afford to send them to school. What I felt very acutely was that this is a human rights issue. These children don't have food security, they don't have sanitation, they don't go to school and their mothers are desperately trying to work their way out of this. And, this time, it was the United States that was the particular focus because of the cotton subsidies to producers here: some to producers who are not well off, but others to very wealthy producers of cotton. And again, it's something we're going to have to look at during this year.

I thought it was a backdrop—with a very human face—to some of the issues that I wanted to talk about because these inequalities we face are a terrible indictment of our collective humanity. Indeed, it's inaccurate to say that we face them. The truth is that most of the time we ignore them or are indifferent to them. Yet these global inequalities should haunt us. I believe they should shame us. For the first time in human history we have the capacity and resources to
eliminate them, but what we lack is political will, a sense of connection and a sense of urgency. I think it’s worth bringing home in statistics, for a moment, how great these global inequalities are.

...global inequalities should haunt us. I believe they should shame us.

The Human Development Report\(^1\) of 2004 gives some indicators. I quote:

More than 800 million people suffer from undernourishment. Some 100 million children, who should be in school are not, 60 million of them girls. More than a billion people survive on less than $1 a day. Some 1.8 billion people live in countries where political regimes do not fully accommodate democratic, political and civil freedoms. And about 900 million people belong to ethnic, religious, racial or linguistic groups that face discrimination....The picture that emerges is increasingly one of two very different groups of countries: those that have benefited from development, and those who have been left behind....An unprecedented number of countries saw their development slide backwards in the 1990s. In 46 countries people are poorer today than in 1990. In 25 countries more people go hungry today than a decade ago.\(^2\)

And the figure isn't in that particular extract, but the one that I find most compelling in one sense, and most shocking in another, is that UNICEF [the United Nations Children's Fund] tells us that 30,000 children die each day from hunger or from preventable diseases—from the diseases that I've seen, like diarrhea and malaria due to the lack of bed nets. Bed nets cost $5 and, in fact, should be available without cost to families in infected areas. These are very real issues.

More and more people are conscious of the intolerable burden of debt on the poorest countries, a debt which was often incurred in the past by bad dictators who built fancy palaces or military equipment that wasn’t needed and which never benefited the general population. What’s less appreciated is that poor countries are currently financing the huge deficit here in the United States and deficits in other wealthy countries. The World Bank’s report, Global Development Finance [2004]: Harnessing Cyclical Gains for Development, puts it this way: “Since 2000, the developing world has been a net exporter of capital to the advanced economies.”\(^3\) Larry Summers—under some pressure at the moment as President of Harvard University—in The Business Times on the ninth of March, 2004, explained that “the largest international flow of fixed income debt today takes the form of borrowing by the world’s richest nations, at (probably) negative real interest rates from countries with very large numbers of poor.”\(^4\) This is one of the global inequities that we need to bear in mind. Not only is more debt relief for the poorest of countries essential, but rich countries, such as the United States, should no longer borrow cheaply from poorer ones.

Another problem is the unfairness of global governments. This was analyzed by the World Commission on the Social Dimensions of Globalization in its report about 18 months ago called Fair Globalization.\(^5\) I am a member of something called the Helsinki Group on Globalization and Democracy, and we’re sort of following up on these reports because we’ve had a lot of reports and are trying to work out how we get more implementation, how we get more action for change. And as a member of the Helsinki Group, I was in Tanzania last year, last fall when President [Benjamin] Mkapa of Tanzania was Co-Chair

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\(^1\) Human Development Reports are commissioned annually by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). See Related Resources.

\(^2\) See Related Resources.


\(^4\) The World Commission on the Social Dimensions of Globalization was established by the International Labor Organization in 2002, and released its report in February of 2004.
of the global commission and made a passionate plea to us, and I wanted to take his words because I thought he really spoke from the heart. He said to the members of the Helsinki Group:

I urge you to take up the challenge, to agitate for the political will in all governments to do much more to improve the global governments of globalization, and to create opportunities for people within countries and opportunities for countries within the international system to benefit more from globalization. Political and government leaders are beginning to understand that global peace and security cannot be guaranteed without global, social and economic justice, and success in the war on poverty. The imbalances of power and influence in the process, and the inequalities of the benefits of globalization are not only a moral wrong, but they are one of the factors fanning the flame of crime nationally and across borders, and probably the ogre of terrorism. In an increasingly integrated world, it is futile for rich countries to believe they can shield themselves away from those negative aspects of globalization. It’s in everyone’s long-term interests that these aspects are adequately addressed rather than wished away. For global governments to be fair, globalization must be much more inclusive than it is today. Democracy and human rights that are rightly demanded at the national level must be reflected at the global level. Otherwise, most of the developing countries will see calls of more democracy and human rights at the national level as hypocrisy and double standards. Globalization and its governance must be more inclusive politically; it must be more inclusive economically; and it must be more inclusive culturally. It must also be more inclusive in its promotion of human and social security.23

Another reason for urgency in looking at these problems of global inequalities is that most of the world population increase which will occur in the next few decades, estimated as adding a further 2 billion people overall, will be in the poorest countries. Already we have a profile of some of the poorest countries showing that at least half of their population is under 25, with youth unemployment at over 60 percent. Can we begin to predict the outcomes of a further substantial increase of angry and frustrated young people without real hope for their future?

Statistics give us the numbers we account for in addressing inequalities. They fail to convey the humiliation, insecurities, hopelessness, the lack of dignity involved. Listening to a family living in absolute poverty, it’s this lack that they speak of: the lack of self-respect, the indignity and humiliation of a refugee camp, the invisibility of being homeless, the helplessness in the face of violence, including violence caused by those in uniform, who should protect.

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Statistics give us the numbers we account for in addressing inequalities. They fail to convey the humiliation, insecurities, hopelessness, the lack of dignity involved.

I often think of a particular individual who I met when I was visiting a refugee camp at the time of the terrible conflict in Kosovo that had driven out so many of the population of Kosovo into surrounding countries. I was in the capital of Albania visiting some of these people who were desperate, who had just come from a situation of terrible violence. And I was with some of my human rights colleagues—because I was the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights at the time—who were taking some of the stories of violations with a view to subsequent prosecution in the International Tribunal. And one of them said to me, “Would you like to come around the corner? There’s a teacher here who’s teaching children.”

So I said, “Yes, I’d love to come around and see what she’s doing.” And I came around, and it was a young teacher, teaching a class of children, on grass.

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23 President Mkapa spoke at the second meeting of the Helsinki Group in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, from 29-31 August 2004. The Helsinki Group was part of the Helsinki Process on Globalization and Democracy, and finished its work as part of the process in June 2005. See Related Resources.
I think we also need to think what we mean by community. It meant one thing in 1948. It probably, for Eleanor Roosevelt, was quite a broad community, but for many people it would have been their local state, their local town, their local community. But now as we increasingly recognize, we live in a global community. And we do have these important covenants and conventions—I won’t go into them now, but we can perhaps talk about them a little more in the question and answer session—but they were all addressed in a world conference in 1993 in Vienna under the banner, “All Human Rights for All,” which was endorsing a very strong link between human rights, democracy and development. And we began this century, the 21st century, with an important affirmation of that link. In September 2000 in New York, the largest gathering ever of heads of state and government came together for a Millennium General Assembly, and they adopted what’s called the Millennium Declaration, in which the international community renewed its commitment to the principles of justice and international law. The Millennium Declaration stressed the need for sustained efforts to create a shared future, based upon our common humanity in all its diversity. And it identified a priority which says it all, if we could only do it. This is exactly what the heads of state and government committed to: they said it was their priority to make globalization work for “all the world’s people.”

It’s simply said, but it isn’t happening.

The moment was also marked by a spirit of re-dedication to international law and institutions as the best hope for the 21st century. And the Millennium Development Goals were agreed to with specific targets and timelines as the practical global agenda. I often stop at this point and say, “Am I connecting when I talk about the Millennium Development Goals?” I feel I am to those that have been involved in the Joan Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice because these goals are extraordinarily important. But I have found that for wide audiences on the whole, the goals are not something that people automatically know about.

And again, it’s that very human reality for hundreds of thousands in need, in many cases for people who are stuck in a situation like that for something like 15 years. And yet, starting with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, and carried forward in the body of international law that’s been painstakingly developed over half a century, the world has expressed through human rights a legal framework of shared commitment to the values of dignity, equality and human security for all people. So our challenge, your challenge as well as mine, is to give those values practical effect, both in our own communities and in the global community of nations. We each have a responsibility to help realize the vision of the Universal Declaration. I’d like to quote two brief articles from the 30 articles of the Universal Declaration, which is actually quite short in itself.

Article I proclaims that “all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.” And dignity comes before rights, which I like very much. We don’t think about that enough. It’s that self-respect, it’s that self-worth, that matters so much. And Article 29 we seem to have ignored in the western world to a very large extent. It says that “everyone has duties to the community,” without which you do not gain the full expression of your personality. Remarkable statement, because what it’s saying to us is that each of us should recognize that we have duties to the community and we need to do something about it.

I remember there was a line with some washing drying on it beside them. They had no books, no pencils, nothing. But she was teaching. And she finished the class and came over to me, and she said, “Well, I’m teaching because it will keep me sane.” This is what I do.” But she said, “I’d love if you would come and meet my parents.” And as we walked to the corner of the refugee camp where her parents were, she told me about being driven from their home, literally, and seeing their home burnt behind them. And she said, “We were relatively well off. I got university education and I’m a teacher. My family was quite well off and now we have nothing. And the problem is that my mother is a diabetic and she can’t get to the latrines, which are at the other end of camp, in time, especially at night.” And then I went and met her mother.

And again, it’s that very human reality for hundreds of thousands in need, in many cases for people who are stuck in a situation like that for something like 15 years. And yet, starting with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, and carried forward in the body of international law that’s been painstakingly developed over half a century, the world has expressed through human rights a legal framework of shared commitment to the values of dignity, equality and human security for all people. So our challenge, your challenge as well as mine, is to give those values practical effect, both in our own communities and in the global community of nations. We each have a responsibility to help realize the vision of the Universal Declaration. I’d like to quote two brief articles from the 30 articles of the Universal Declaration, which is actually quite short in itself.

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I think we also need to think what we mean by community. It meant one thing in 1948. It probably, for Eleanor Roosevelt, was quite a broad community, but for many people it would have been their local state, their local town, their local community. But now as we increasingly recognize, we live in a global community. And we do have these important covenants and conventions—I won’t go into them now, but we can perhaps talk about them a little more in the question and answer session—but they were all addressed in a world conference in 1993 in Vienna under the banner, “All Human Rights for All,” which was endorsing a very strong link between human rights, democracy and development. And we began this century, the 21st century, with an important affirmation of that link. In September 2000 in New York, the largest gathering ever of heads of state and government came together for a Millennium General Assembly, and they adopted what’s called the Millennium Declaration, in which the international community renewed its commitment to the principles of justice and international law. The Millennium Declaration stressed the need for sustained efforts to create a shared future, based upon our common humanity in all its diversity. And it identified a priority which says it all, if we could only do it. This is exactly what the heads of state and government committed to: they said it was their priority to make globalization work for “all the world’s people.”

It’s simply said, but it isn’t happening.

The moment was also marked by a spirit of re-dedication to international law and institutions as the best hope for the 21st century. And the Millennium Development Goals were agreed to with specific targets and timelines as the practical global agenda. I often stop at this point and say, “Am I connecting when I talk about the Millennium Development Goals?” I feel I am to those that have been involved in the Joan Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice because these goals are extraordinarily important. But I have found that for wide audiences on the whole, the goals are not something that people automatically know about.

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24 The 1993 World Conference on Human Rights, which took place from 14-25 June in Vienna, adopted the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action. See Related Resources.

25 See Related Resources for information on accessing the full text of the Millennium Declaration.
The eight goals include halving the number of those in extreme poverty and hunger by 2015; achieving universal primary education for boys and girls by 2015 (now remember what I said earlier, that more than 100 million children never go to school, and the majority of them are girls, so it’s a big change); specific targets for promoting gender equality and empowerment of women; reducing child mortality; improving maternal health (because more than half a million women die annually at childbirth or just before or after childbirth, simply because there was nobody there to help, nobody that knew what to do, or no proper sanitation); combating HIV, AIDS, malaria and other diseases; ensuring environmental sustainability; and the last goal, goal eight, includes developing a global partnership for development.26

And that global partnership was discussed in Monterrey in Mexico in a conference on financing for development.27 The conference was addressing the problem that is likely raised: well, if we want to achieve all these goals, what’s it going to cost? I remember listening to the debate and having the benefit of the report of a group of economists under the chairmanship of Ernesto Zedillo, the former President of Mexico. The report28 estimated that the cost of implementing the Millennium Goals, and therefore making globalization work for all of the world’s people, would be approximately an additional $50 billion a year, which was at the time roughly double the global development aid budget of all countries. I thought it was a very large amount of money, $50 billion.

But when you look at other figures: when you look at the fact that the world spends more than $900 billion on armaments and military equipment; when you look at even agricultural subsidies, which I was talking about earlier, which amounts to more than $300 billion a year, between mainly the United States, Europe, Japan, other rich countries in subsidizing; then $50 billion a

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26 See Related Resources.
27 The International Conference on Financing for Development was held in Monterrey, Mexico, from 18-22 March 2002.
28 The report of the United Nations High-Level Panel on Financing for Development, chaired by Mr. Zedillo, was released in June 2001. See Related Resources.

year to really make an impact on global inequalities doesn’t seem such a great amount of money. And if it will bring about the kind of security that President Mkapa was talking about, then it would seem extraordinarily important.

But, of course, one year after the Millennium Assembly and the Millennium Declaration, we had the terrible attacks in this country and an understandable focus on security. Our post-9/11 world is preoccupied with different experiences of insecurity: the atrocities in Darfur in Sudan; the misery of millions living with and orphaned by HIV and AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa, Asia and elsewhere; the long hardships suffered by indigenous peoples in the Americas; the humiliating poverty and slums and rural areas in the developing world. They all tell us the deplorable truth that governments in different regions of the world are failing to provide even the rudiments of human security.

There’s no doubt that since those terrible attacks in this country and other attacks such as in Spain, Bali and in parts of Africa, the focus is on state security and combating acts of terrorism. But the stark reality is that the terrible attacks of 9/11 didn’t have any discernable impact on the millions of people already at daily risk from violence, disease and abject poverty. Their insecurity continues to stem from worry about where the next meal will come from, how to acquire medicines for a dying child, how to avoid the criminal with a gun and how to manage a household as a ten-year-old AIDS orphan. This is the comprehensive insecurity of the powerless. For women, gender itself is a risk factor threatening human security: the secret violence of household abuse, the private oppressions of lack of property or inheritance rights, the lifelong deprivations that go with lack of schooling, and the structural problems of political exclusion. Women are particularly vulnerable in zones of conflict and in post-conflict situations.
And it is good that we are at last recognizing the important role that women can play as actors for change, as those who can make a real difference.

There was an important report by an independent Commission on Human Security, co-chaired by Amartya Sen and Sadako Ogata, which compiled a report called Human Security Now, which was published in 2003. This explains that human security involves a new paradigm which shifts from an over-emphasis on security of the state, to security of the people—to human security. The emphasis is on the extent to which human security brings together the human elements of security, of rights and of development. The report identifies two underlying concepts: protection and empowerment, which lie at the heart of human security. The first of these, protection, is primarily a state responsibility. It’s a very real responsibility, and sometimes can be an international responsibility, as has been made clear by the high level panel that reported recently to Secretary-General Kofi Annan, which emphasized the importance of a responsibility to protect, inclusive of the responsibility at the international level.

I think that the outline that I’ve given has really brought home that we need to focus on the human elements of security as a way of addressing the imbalances and the inequities in our world of today. Secretary-General Kofi Annan put it this way: “Human security in its broader sense embraces far more than the absence of violent conflict. It encompasses human rights, good governance, access to education, health care and ensuring that each individual has opportunities and choices to fulfill his or her potential.” And I believe that linking human security with development in this way can have a positive impact on the allocation of resources.

The project that I lead in New York, Realizing Rights: the Ethical Globalization Initiative, is seeking to extend the human rights analysis and a strong gender perspective into issues of trade and development by looking at agricultural subsidies, as I’ve explained, and by looking into health issues, particularly the pandemic of HIV and AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa, and into migration. I serve on the Global Commission on International Migration, which will be having hearings in Mexico City in May for the Americas to look at issues of migration in this region. We’ve already had hearings in Asia, which were held in Manila, the Philippines. We had hearings for North Africa, in Cairo, which looked at both sides of the Mediterranean. We had hearings in Budapest for Europe, and we had hearings most recently in Cape Town for the South African region. And it was interesting that many of the problems were similar: the problems of undocumented migrants; of trafficking; the problems of poverty driving labor mobility, where if they cannot travel legally, they will fall into the hands of gangs who smuggle people, and in some cases—particularly those people trying to get to Europe, or those trying to cross the border south of here—people are sometimes at risk of their lives. What we will try to do in the Global Commission on International Migration is have an approach that manages migration with a more human face, with a more human and humane dimension by recognizing that all migrants do have human rights.

For women, gender itself is a risk factor threatening human security.

So let me now come to the most important challenge that we face. Given these kinds of global inequalities, how can we mobilize to address them? How can we make a difference? I believe that this year, 2005, gives us a unique opportunity to begin a serious process of making a change that matters. And in a curious way, just before the year began, we had a terrible tragedy and catastrophe which caused an enormously positive human response. And I’m talking of course about the Asian tsunami. I’m Honorary President of Oxfam International, as I mentioned, and Oxfam was overwhelmed by the response of individuals and the money pouring in. Indeed at one point, Oxfam had to say,
look, don’t give us any more money for the tsunami. We can now cope and we have more than we can deal with over the coming years. Remember the other areas, like Darfur, that need more support. I understand that some 30 percent of households in this country gave something, made some personal gesture towards the relief for the victims of the tsunami, and for the rebuilding of their lives and their communities. So people are ready to respond.

During 2005, there are three very significant occasions when, at a political level, a change can be made. And something else has happened. The various groups that have been working on issues of poverty—like Make Poverty History in Britain, Ireland, and parts of Europe, there’s the One campaign here in this country, and other campaigns in Latin America, in Africa, in Asia—they’ve come together in what’s called Global Call to Action against Poverty, or GCAP. It was launched at the World Social Forum in January of this year, in Porto Alegre [Brazil]. It was also endorsed in the other forum, the World Economic Forum, where I was present at the launch presided over by Kumi Naidoo, who is a South African and head of CIVICUS, a large grouping of civil society groups. It also had my fellow Irish person, a very famous person, Bono, and Gordon Brown, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, was also present. We were welcoming the establishment of the Global Call to Action against Poverty. There was a senior representative of the trade union movement, a woman I’m glad to say, Sharon Burrow. She is the first woman president of one of the major trade unions.31

And the idea is that on three occasions this year, those who support this Global Call to Action against Poverty will wear a white band. It’s a very simple symbol of the four objectives of the Global Call to Action against Poverty. They are calls for fair trade, the issue that I began with in talking about Mali and Mozambique; cancellation of debt for the poorest countries because it’s crippling their capacity to develop their education, health systems and so on; the fulfillment of the commitment to more development aid in order to help fulfill the Millennium Goals; and fulfillment of all countries of their commitments under the Millennium Development Goals, which includes good governance commitments for developing countries. These are the four objectives.

And the mobilization will take place on the three occasions when there is an opportunity for real political will to be exercised. The first of these occasions is the G8 meeting in Britain—it will actually take place at Gleneagles in Scotland in early July. So on the first of July, there will be a global call to action against poverty, a day of wearing the white band. The second day will be on the 10th of September, when the high level special meeting of the General Assembly is due to meet during the following week to talk about taking stock of the Millennium Development Goals after the first five years, with a view to saying, we’ve only ten years left before 2015, how are we really going to ensure implementation? The analysis at the moment is that there is a falling behind on most of the goals, and that African countries have no hope of achieving any of the goals unless circumstances change. They have no hope of achieving any of the goals until about 2050, not 2015. There is an urgent need to change that.

The third date is the ministerial meeting of the World Trade Organization which will take place in Hong Kong in December. I think the third date for the mobilization with the white band of millions of ordinary people urging more commitment to the Millennium Development Goals will take place on the

31 Sharon Burrow is the President of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU).
10th of December. I’m saying this because it’s an opportunity, particularly for some of those who have been involved with the Joan Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice, to inform themselves and perhaps to build up some support here in San Diego. It seems to me to reflect the kind of generosity of spirit that was evident in the response to the tsunami, and it’s something that people can do.

I’m often asked, “What can I do?” Yes, you can buy fair trade coffee and other products. Yes, you can inform yourself and be aware of companies that have bad practices that use child labor or exploitative conditions, and not buy their products. And you can be an informed consumer. You can be involved in good causes locally and internationally, supporting Amnesty, Human Rights Watch and others; but now, I think you can be part of a desire to have a fairer globalization. We’ve talked about it long enough. We’ve had enough reports. I think it’s time now that people walked out into the street on certain days and wore a symbol to say this globalization is unfair. We have to do something about it.

As well as needing fairer globalization, we also need to reinforce that commitment to human rights as part of our birthright. So let me conclude by highlighting the emphasis placed by Shirin Ebadi of Iran, the 2003 Nobel Peace Prize winner, on the universality of human rights. I was actually in Tehran a couple of years ago when I was High Commissioner, and I went to her university and saw the wonderful course she was teaching her students, and that there were marginally more girl students than boy students. They asked me wonderful questions, and their English was remarkable as well. I was delighted when she got the Nobel Peace Prize.

In her contribution to the Human Development Report of 2004, she begins by identifying the differences in people that are part of cultural diversity. She emphasizes the importance of cultural diversity. She then emphasizes that human rights embody the fundamental values of human civilizations. She concludes, “So cultural relativity should never be used as a pretext to violate human rights, since these rights embody the most fundamental values of human civilizations. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is needed universally, applicable to both East and West. It is compatible with every faith and religion. Failing to respect our human rights only undermines our humanity. Let us not destroy this fundamental truth; if we do, the weak will have nowhere to turn.”

That is a wonderful way of affirming the importance of human rights. And now I look forward to hearing your views on all of this. Thank you for being such a good audience. Thank you very much.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

The audience submitted questions which were read by Dr. Joyce Neu, Executive Director of the Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice.

JN: Thank you so much for that amazing speech. Our theme this year has been “Human Rights under Pressure,” and what you are referring to is quite applicable to the fact that we’re not meeting our goals.

There was a development today in the United Nations: the U.S. agreed to allow the International Criminal Court to hear the case of Darfur. The United States, which has not supported the International Criminal Court, had been arguing that the situation in Darfur was genocide, and yet, it would not permit the case to go to the International Criminal Court. So it had asked that a new court be created, which would be incredibly expensive, very time consuming and very inefficient. And today at the U.N., the U.S. has agreed to allow the case to go to the International Criminal Court. When we speak of a global community for human rights, I’m wondering how you see the United States’ role in this.

MR: I regard this as really very good news because the situation in Darfur is actually worse than we think. I get a lot of feedback from Save the Children on the ground there, from my colleagues in Oxfam, and from U.N. colleagues, and it really has been a terrible shame on us all that we have not been more effective. We said after the Second World War, after the Holocaust, “Never again.” We said after Rwanda, “Never again,” and after Kosovo. Yet the world has been very slow to react. The difference now is that we do have this International Criminal Court. I was High Commissioner when the statute of the court was agreed to in Rome. I was there, and I said very publicly that, in my opinion, it was one of the most important advances for humankind. It means that terrible tyrants and despots can run, but they cannot hide now. We have a place that they can be brought to, and they know it. It’s already beginning to have an effect internationally. It is a step that will make a big difference on the ground in Darfur. I have no doubt about it. We must do something that is really effective. So what I would hope is that this step of allowing the issue to be referred to the International Criminal Court will cause a re-opening and rethinking of the possibilities of the United States accepting and ratifying the statute of the court. I know that there are concerns, but I believe those concerns can be addressed.

There’s another instrument that I would love the United States to look at again, and there is a reason why they might. I was in Cape Town earlier this month at a World Congress on Family and Children’s Rights. It was the fourth such World Congress. And it was marking the 15th anniversary of the most ratified human rights instrument, the Convention of the Rights of the Child. And it was noted, as a number of you know, that the only two countries that haven’t ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child are Somalia—which has actually signed now and probably will ratify it when they get a government together to do that—and the United States. One hundred ninety-two countries have ratified this. And what we were hearing at this conference was democracy for children. We were hearing the countries’ reports to the Committee on the Rights of the Child in Geneva, of how they are progressively implementing rights of children in their countries. The committee has looked at more than 250 of these reports, and has issued general comments of jurisprudence about children’s identity, about children with disabilities, about refugee children, and how important those are.

The constitutional barrier as I have understood it, which until recently was invoked as the reason why the United States has not ratified, was that the Convention prohibited applying capital punishment to those who committed a crime while under 18, while juveniles. But, as you will have noticed, the Supreme Court in this country has recently found unconstitutional that provision. That seems to open up the real possibility. So rather than go through all the issues I might possibly go through, I would say that now is the time perhaps for the United States to really look at some of these conventions.
known. And that was why there was a major project recently directed by Professor Jeffery Sachs of Columbia University, who is a good friend, and who is actually on the board of the project, Realizing Rights, that I promote. He had a major project called the Millennium Project, with about 250 leading academics on issues like hunger, education, HIV and AIDS, maternal mortality, child mortality and environmental issues. Those task forces reported on how to support those developing countries that are making progress. And, in fact, countries like China and India have made an awful lot of progress on the first goal of bringing a lot of their population out of poverty. But it’s mainly African and some South Asian countries that have huge problems there.

JN: Thank you. Following up on the millennium issue and the countries that are doing well, there’s a question about how Ireland is doing with meeting the Millennium Development Goals.

MR: That’s a fair question. I should have to answer for Ireland as well. In actual fact, Ireland made a commitment that I was extremely proud of at the Millennium Assembly in September 2000. It made a commitment to reach the target of 0.7 percent of GDP in development aid by 2007. It was 0.7 percent by ’07. Unfortunately, there’s been a bit of slippage, and I had to be a little critical of the government back home. And a lot of very good, idealistic young people joined in criticizing; but the commitment is there. It’s a question of what particular year it will be arrived at.

There are five countries that have already met that target, and six, including France, the United Kingdom and Ireland that have made a commitment. In contrast, the United States has a very low level of official development aid. Individuals from the United States are very generous, and the United States does a lot in peacekeeping, but I think the figure, instead of being 0.7 percent, is 0.14 percent, which is certainly the lowest of any industrialized country. The commitment made by President Bush at Monterrey, which is going into the Millennium Challenge Account, is making a difference. It’s a bigger

JN: I cannot speak for other members of the audience, but I think many of us are probably not as aware as we should be of all the treaties and conventions to which the U.S. is or is not a signatory, and part of it is we need to be better educated and we need to be better advocates. Could you tell us about some countries which are outstanding in striving to fulfill the Millennium Development Goals?

MR: That’s a good question. The truth is that developing countries are taking the agenda of the Millennium Development Goals very seriously. I can think of Ghana, for example, which is doing outstanding work. So is Tanzania, President Mkapa’s country. They are hoping in this shared global agenda, which the U.N. and all of its agencies have adopted as their priority, which the World Bank has adopted, which donor governments have adopted. You may have seen the recent report of Prime Minister Tony Blair’s Commission on Africa, and that commission recognizes the progress that is being made, including progress in governments in a number of African countries. Some of the poorer Asian countries are very committed to the Millennium Development Goals.

I think what is worrying is that this global prioritizing agenda is not sufficiently

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33 The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, also known as CEDAW. See Related Resources.
34 The Blair Commission for Africa released its report, Our Common Interest, in March 2005. See Related Resources.
35 Bush proposed a 50 percent increase in core development assistance over the following three years.
commitment. As far as I know, despite the fact that the Millennium Challenge Account has been established, no money has yet to be dispensed out of that account to any developing country. I was being asked about Ireland and I go back to the U.S. It’s terrible.

When I was President of Ireland, I made a lot of links between Ireland and developing countries. I think I should tell you a story that I used a lot to try to get young Irish people to think of connections with developing countries; it’s a connection between this country and Ireland that may surprise some of you. Ireland suffered a terrible famine when the potato crop failed in 1845. The potato was the staple crop of the poorest Irish. And the potato crop failed again in 1846. And then, when it failed in the third year, those who were stronger left and came on what we call cotton ships to this country, to Canada or to Australia. People were dying in the hundreds of thousands, and about 2 million ultimately died. But in the spring of 1847 in Oklahoma, there was a meeting of the Choctaw people to mark ten years since they’d been driven from their tribal lands and come through what they call the Trail of Tears. And they learned—we don’t quite know how, we think it might have been a passing priest who mentioned that there were people starving on an island far away because their staple crop had failed. And that was completely understandable to the Choctaw people. So they raised $173 and sent it to the relief of Irish famine victims. We know that because the Victorians are very good bookkeepers. So they kept a very good record of how it was spent.

With stories like that, it’s fair to say that Irish people are very connected with development issues. They do know all about the Millennium Development Goals and are committed to try to fulfill our history. Ireland is prosperous now. It’s more or less peaceful with Northern Ireland; there have been great strides for peace with Northern Ireland. And it’s payback time, if you like. It’s time to reconnect with other countries that need our support as we needed the support of this country and others in our worst times.

JN: Thank you. Globalization and human rights also drastically affect the environment. How has this relationship been included and explored in your work?

MR: Again, that’s a very good question. And if I might just go a little broader for a minute in answering it. The first major world conference was the Rio Conference in 1992, which brought about Agenda 21. And if you look at Agenda 21, there’s no reference to human rights. And a year later, there was a big global conference about human rights in Vienna that I mentioned, the World Conference on Human Rights. If you look at the Vienna Programme of Action, there’s no mention of the environment. But in the Johannesburg Conference to mark ten years after Rio, the link was made, and it should be made, as it’s part of the link between human rights, democracy and development. This is about the sustainability of development. The banner of civil society in Johannesburg was “No sustainable development without human rights.” I think it’s a very good recognition of the interconnections. In our work we take those interconnections very seriously and we try, particularly, to look at issues of trade and development. But even issues like the right to health as a human right depends on the social determinants of health, food and safe water. And so, no matter where you look, the environment is a central component and is threatened, as we’ve seen from before.

JN: The eight Millennium Development Goals to improve the condition of the poor did not include population control. Why not?

MR: No, they did not expressly include that, and indeed, there was some dismay among the women’s movement that there was not reference in the Millennium Development Goals to issues like violence against women or reproductive health. Part of what the Millennium Project work has done with these 250 experts is to reinsert these issues as necessary in the context of the Millennium Development Goals. So there has been a re-linking with a wider context, and I would say that that would be something that would probably be debated at the General Assembly in September. The goals were necessarily briefly stated with their timelines and targeting to ensure that there would be progress, and that

36 Agenda 21 is the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development.
37 The result of the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002 was the Programme for Further Implementation of Agenda 21.
outlawing it in a parliamentary sense. World opinion matters a great deal, and where the attention has been focused on situations in Pakistan and in Nigeria, that’s been helpful. We need to stop and look at where we’ve come ten years after the Beijing Conference—the fact that we still have countries that have these terrible honor killings is, in itself, quite an indictment. I’m aware that there is a major commission on violence against women which the Secretary-General is setting in train, and I may be partially involved in it. I would hope that one of the things we would focus on is the need to eliminate the practice of honor killings for once and for all, for all countries.

MR: That is a very serious problem in those countries, and it’s a problem that a number of the U.N. rapporteurs have been drawing attention to, and that I also drew attention to a great deal when I was serving as High Commissioner of Human Rights. It’s really tragic and terrible. It’s all about the unequal power relationships. The fact that a woman would be blamed for a situation, and then killed to secure the honor of the family—even in some cases, she could be raped—it’s a terrible situation. There has been some progress in some countries. Jordan has been making progress slowly on this issue and in

JN: Thank you. There is a question here about Tibet. In all the meetings that you attend, is there ever a discussion on the situation in Tibet?

MR: An interesting question. When I was discussing with the Chinese authorities in my first year as High Commissioner the possibility of visiting Tibet, I made it difficult for them because I said, “I won’t visit China unless I also visit Tibet.” They said, “You can’t visit Tibet.” And I said, “Well, I’m not going to come to China.” Anyway, I did visit Tibet and I was very glad that I had that opportunity because it brought home the human rights dimensions of the issues there. In my six subsequent visits to China I made a point of raising issues that would be made known to me by some of the human rights organizations that were working on the ground and were able to give me specific cases, specific names that I would raise with the Chinese authorities. And I think it’s very important that this continues to be the case, that the people do raise these issues. I have great admiration for the Dalai Lama. I’ve met him on a significant number of occasions. And I think that the hope is that there would be some possibilities of reconciliation there. There had been some minor indications of a possible movement in that direction.

At the Commission on Human Rights each year, issues of Tibet arose. I had one very harrowing memory. I think it must have been about the year 2000, and some young Tibetans were so desperate about the situation in Tibet they decided to go on hunger strike in front of the Commission of Human Rights. They went on a really very serious hunger strike. And, at the end, they wouldn’t
come off the hunger strike, and it was getting to the stage where at least one of them was likely to become very seriously ill or perhaps die. And, at the end, in a poignant way, they were persuaded to end if I would come and talk to them and raise them with the Chinese authorities. I actually gave the drink of orange juice reinforced with vitamins to a young Tibetan to end his hunger strike. And he was crying because he felt he was ending a hunger strike without being able to get what he wanted. But I did raise again the issue very strongly at that time. It is a human rights issue that needs to be on the table, and whoever asked the question, I hope they'll continue to care about it as well.

JN: I think it was yesterday or today that the World Bank unanimously approved Paul Wolfowitz to be the next president. And the question here is, in what ways if any does the World Bank need to change to better serve developing countries? And then, part two, would you care to comment on the appointment of Paul Wolfowitz to head the World Bank?

MR: I heard it said, apparently you can’t become president of the World Bank unless you have Wolf in your name: from Wolfensohn to Wolfowitz. I am very keen to continue the discussions that we are having very actively with the World Bank. I have a friendship with Jim Wolfensohn, the current president, and we’ve been debating since my time as High Commissioner when he invited me to give a presidential lecture in the Bank itself. I’m glad to say it was an overflow audience at that time as well. And the debate is centering on getting the Bank to adopt a more human rights approach, a rights-based approach, as it tackles poverty. And Wolfensohn uses frequently in my presence the story of when he came to the Bank as president, he wasn’t allowed to use the “C” word: corruption. The Bank, at that time, felt that to raise issues of corruption was political, and it wasn’t until there was a study that showed that corruption has economic consequences that the Bank was able to use the “C” word and talk about corruption. So I have been trying to get the Bank, officially, at board level, to use the “HR” word: human rights.

I would say that, rather than comment on Mr. Wolfowitz because I haven’t met him in the context of his new duties, I hope he can persuade his board to enable the World Bank to have a human rights approach, a rights-based approach, which all the U.N. agencies now do—they have a common understanding of a rights-based approach. And the difference is very palpable in tackling poverty because it’s a cultural change. Either you tackle poverty as meeting the needs of people, the need for safe water, for sanitation, for shelter, for food, for education, or you take the approach that these are rights guaranteed under the Universal Declaration and it’s a matter of empowering people and working with them and trying to secure, with them, that their rights are fulfilled, and that means the responsibility by governments, and also responsibility increasingly of the corporate sector.

The human rights framework was a framework to secure rights for individuals and duties to the community—so responsibility as well—but also to curb power and to be a protection against the abuse of power. And in 1948, the power was seen to be exercised by states, state sovereignty. But increasingly, it’s one of the influences of globalization that power has shifted, and the corporations now provide so many services, including services in the justice area like prisons, protection and security duties, and so on. So that’s why in the project I lead, Realizing Rights, we spend a lot of time dealing with corporations. And I chair a Business Leaders Initiative on Human Rights, where major corporations are working with U.N. norms for transnational corporations and other businesses, and sort of road-testing these norms in a practical way and find that, in fact, it’s very motivating for their staff. It’s a win-win situation as far as they are concerned.

JN: Thank you. In fact, I think here at USD, in the Center for Christian Spirituality, I believe that Sister Quinn works with a number of the leaders in the corporate world, as does our School of Business. And one of the things they appear to be hungry for is to know more about giving back and about doing the right thing. So I think this University is making a contribution.
Do you see the principle of universal jurisdiction ever truly serving as a deterrent to crimes against humanity?

MR: Again, a very good and informed question. I suppose the example of an exercise of jurisdiction of this kind that we are all aware of was the Pinochet case, where the House of Lords took that jurisdiction arising out of a convention on torture. It had a huge impact. I myself feel that it can give rise to some problems of an over-reach in a situation where the jurisdiction may be assumed, but there may not be a capacity to have as fair a trial as could happen in other ways. So I suppose what I prefer is that we have the International Criminal Court for egregious human rights violations. But there’s no doubt the fact that some countries and some courts have actively exercised a universal jurisdiction has frightened quite a lot of tyrants and former tyrants. Belgium, for example, is a country that tyrants no longer go to for help and needs because they are afraid that they will end up being prosecuted. It’s quite difficult to have a real balance where you also ensure that if you exercise jurisdiction, you also have a fair trial.

JN: How do you counter the corruption of government officials if they squander loans; aren’t they more likely to squander grants and gifts?

MR: Well, let me just say that corruption is very pervasive and a very big human rights problem. And I work quite closely with Peter Eigen, the head of Transparency International. I spoke at Transparency International meetings about the link between corruption and human rights. I’ve seen this in so many different ways: if a poor family has to pay to have their child at school, pay for medical care, pay for what shouldn’t be the case, then that’s a corruption that’s directly affecting human rights.

But corruption isn’t only a problem in developing countries. Indeed, Ireland has had its corruption scandals in the planning sphere, where ministers have abused their powers, including a former foreign minister, and we’ve had a series of tribunals. It really shook the Irish system when the judge in the tribunals said, “This is corrupt. This is corruption.” It was very important that it was said very openly and that way. So how do you counter corruption of government officials? I think it’s extraordinarily important to do it. I think there is now an awareness that donors should link with civil society groups and make sure that there is a monitoring with the eyes and ears locally of how money is being spent and then, complaints about corruption. One of the good things about globalization is the globalization of communications. E-mails can now be sent that can draw attention to issues of corruption much more easily than was true in the past.

JN: This is going to be the next to the last question. What is your opinion when a local community in a developed country depends heavily on a certain trade or resource, and then cannot compete on price with an underdeveloped country’s importation of that resource into that country without a tariff or subsidy?

MR: It’s actually the question about the issues that we have to address this year, because we’re facing what’s called the Doha, the development round of the World Trade Organization. And the World Trade Organization has already had judgments against the United States on cotton, and the European Union on sugar. So there’s a need to re-look at the impact of the sugar subsidies.

What is happening is in Mali you have a population of about 12 million, and 3 million are heavily dependent on cotton production for their livelihoods. And the subsidies, I think looking at the year 2003, were about $3 billion here in the United States that goes to about 26,000 producers. And most of it goes to 8,000 producers. Now that’s a lot of money per head to those producers, which means that it lowers the world price of cotton. And then Mali, which produces a beautiful quality of raw cotton, can’t compete. And it’s really very

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38 The House of Lords, the highest court of the United Kingdom, ruled in 1998 that General Augusto Pinochet, the former dictator of Chile from 1973 to 1990, was not entitled to immunity from extradition to face crimes against humanity.

39 Named for the 2001 ministerial conference of the World Trade Organization, which was held in Doha, Qatar. The conference produced the Doha Development Agenda.
stark when you see it. And it’s been seen too long as a trade issue; it’s actually a human rights issue. It’s an issue of struggling, of very poor people who rightly want to work hard and trade out of poverty—as do their governments—rather than be overly dependent on development aid. So that’s the crunch that I was talking about. I’m not going to be very popular now in Ireland talking about this because there are a certain number of jobs in sugar beet. It’s mainly in the west of Ireland, where I come from, and these are small producers. My view is that there should be a phasing into the future of alternatives for those farmers because the cost of sugar beet production is more than twice the cost of sugar cane production. And sugar cane, frankly, is better sugar. So on all counts, that is a human rights issue.

JN: The last question. We’re here at a university where we educate people for the future, and educate young leaders. I understand that you have become a grandmother in the last year or so, and I’m wondering if you could speak to what you would like to see this new generation do that we in another generation have not done. And what advice would you give them to help them do that?

MR: Well, first of all, as somebody who is now teaching in different universities—in the last two weeks I’ve taught in the University of Pretoria in South Africa, where I’m an extraordinary professor, extraordinary enough to have no salary; and at Columbia University yesterday, where I do teach—I have great faith in young people of today. I think there is really a sense that the world is their world. They surf the internet and they know what’s going on. Many of them, the ones that I’m talking to, really do want more values, they want a more values-led globalization. They’re not comfortable about knowing that 30,000 children die every day unnecessarily of hunger or diarrhea. They have a global view.

And the way I talk to college students, young people, about how to identify with that world, I actually reach for another poem of another Irish poet friend of mine, Seamus Heaney. It’s a poem called “From the Republic of Conscience.”40 And Seamus Heaney wrote it for Amnesty International. He gifted it—there’s no copyright. It’s a poem about somebody who goes to the republic of conscience and has a very poetic experience in the republic of conscience. And then he comes back, “the two arms the one length,” “the creeping privilege” having “disappeared,” and so on. And an old man looks him in the face and says, “Now you are a dual citizen.” The poem ends, “Their embassies were everywhere” and “no ambassador would ever be relieved.” There’s the idea: that each of us needs to become a dual citizen, an ambassador of conscience, to have that inner sense. If we had that, if this Global Call to Action against Poverty can be dual citizens of the world saying, “We want a fairer world,” then I think young people could really mobilize to make that difference we need. It’s got to happen. I think young people are in a very good position to mobilize together and link across as they’re doing more and more exchanging, traveling and having that sense of how diverse our world is, which is wonderful. Read Seamus Heaney’s poem, and be a dual citizen. Be an ambassador of conscience. That’s my advice.

40 See Related Resources.
RELATED RESOURCES

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WEBSITES:

Business Leaders Initiative on Human Rights. The BLIHR is a three-year program to help lead and develop the corporate response to human rights. It began in May 2003 and now includes ten companies. Mary Robinson serves as Honorary Chair. Retrieved March 2006, from http://www.blihr.org

Club of Madrid. The Club of Madrid is an independent organization dedicated to strengthening democracy around the world by drawing on the unique experience and resources of its members—democratic former heads of state and government. Retrieved March 2006, from http://clubmadrid.org

Council of Women World Leaders. The Council of Women World Leaders is a network of current and former women heads of state and heads of government established in 1996. The council strives to promote good governance and enhance the experience of democracy globally by increasing the number, effectiveness and visibility of women who lead at the highest levels in their countries. There are currently 31 members. Mary Robinson serves as Chair of the council. Retrieved March 2006, from http://www.womenworldleaders.org

Global Call to Action against Poverty. The Global Call to Action against Poverty is a worldwide alliance committed to making world leaders live up to their promises. Actions were carried out throughout 2005 to lobby governments on issues related to poverty, such as trade justice, debt cancellation, increase in the quantity and quality of aid, and the sustainable implementation of the Millennium Development Goals. Retrieved March 2006, from http://www.whiteband.org

Global Commission on International Migration. The GCIM was commissioned by the U.N. Secretary-General and several governments to provide the framework for the formulation of a coherent, comprehensive and global response to the issue of international migration. The commission released its report in October 2005. Retrieved March 2006, from http://www.gcim.org


Institute for Liberty and Democracy. The ILD, based in Lima, Peru, has created a key that can open the global economic system to everyone—a time-tested strategy for legal reform that offers the majority of the world’s people a stake in the market economy. Retrieved March 2006, from http://www.ild.org.pe

International Criminal Court. The International Criminal Court (ICC) is the first ever permanent, treaty based, international criminal court established to promote the rule of law and ensure that the gravest international crimes do not go unpunished. Retrieved March 2006, from http://www.icc-cpi.int
BOOKS, SPEECHES AND ARTICLES:


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The USD campus, considered one of the most architecturally unique in the nation, is known as Alcalá Park. Like the city of San Diego, the campus takes its name from San Diego de Alcalá, a Franciscan brother who served as the infirmary at Alcalá de Henares, a monastery near Madrid, Spain. The Spanish Renaissance architecture that characterizes the five-century old University of Alcalá serves as the inspiration for the buildings on the University of San Diego campus. The architecture was intended by the founders, Bishop Charles Francis Buddy and Mother Rosalie Hill, to enhance the search for truth through beauty and harmony. Recent additions, such as the state-of-art Donald P. Shiley Center for Science and Technology and soon the new School of Leadership and Education Sciences building, carry on that tradition.

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