

## Consultation - Second Day

Location: The Environmental Division of the World Bank, 1750 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC.

Opening comments were made by Dr. Conroy, who then proceeded to introduce the keynote speaker. Dr. Clovis Maksoud is the director of the Center for the Global South at The American University. He served as Ambassador and Permanent Observer of the League of Arab States at the UN and as its Chief representative in the United States from 1979 until 1990.

Dr. Clovis Maksoud -- The Center for the Global South

Dr. Maksoud was the keynote speaker for the second session. His Center for the Global South at American University is dedicated to studying the challenges of the Global South and advancing strategies on how to address them. The "Global South" is the collective name of the nations of Africa, Central and Latin America, and much of Asia. The Center conducts studies for both the World Bank and the United Nations, and acts as a catalyst between policy makers and the perspectives of the countries of the Global South. The Center has been hailed as "a center of excellence in thinking on the topic of the human future" by Wally N'Dow, the secretary-general for United Nations Human Settlements Program.

Dr. Maksoud's address is transcribed below:

First of all, I feel a little bit awed by the audience ... on the one hand, there is the expertise on the environment, which I am not, and on the other, those whose professional pursuit is the ethical content of our overall international commitment and behavior. So in both I feel that I am here to unlearn some things that I have learned and to try to learn more than to talk. But, in as much as I have been asked to do so, you will have to suffer the next few minutes with me.

Let me just at the outset say what we are witnessing. This is a sort of generalizing session or overview, because we have just finished last month, during a three-day conference, a review and assessment of the whole range of conferences that took place starting with the Children's Conference, and then the Environmental Conference in Rio, and then such as the Women's Rights, Social Development, and Food Security, as well as Habitat II. The basic conclusion is that we have to assess the context in which these global conferences have been made.

There has been an attempt to dismiss these UN conferences as a waste of money, a waste of time, and see them as only a sort of consciousness-raising process. Moreover, it has reinforced the thrust of attack on the United Nations system by some of the more rankling elements in societies. It is an attempt to marginalize the United Nations through further marginalization of these various conferences.

The consensus in the conference we held was that these conferences have been very useful, and that they have sought to integrate more constituencies at a global level; we are all German citizens, American citizens, whatever you like to call it-- this is our legal status, this is our way of mobility, but there are also new constituencies, and new hyphenated constituencies, not only within the areas in which we live- whether one is an Italian-American, or a Spanish-American. There are also constituencies of Environmentalists, constituencies of federalists, constituencies of those who are seeking to empower.

It is this third dimension that is emerging. A level of global citizenship is reinforcing our national and legal concepts of citizenship. It is here that two ways of thinking intersect;

one is the legal sense of belonging-- that is, to your country, to your nation, to your state and the legitimacy of being a global citizen, part of the global constituency, and there are many instances when the legal is not necessarily legitimate, and when the legitimate, unfortunately, at times, is not legal. We have a great deal of evidence on that. Apartheid was a legal authority, because it legislated laws and applied laws, but it wasn't legitimate. And that is where the moral and ethical component of our commitments brings the laws closer to legitimacy.

It is the task, therefore, of the ethical dimension of our lives to render the legal as approximate to legitimacy as possible. That is one aspect. Of these new conferences which raise consciousness about the issues, illegitimate pursuit to reinforce legal and legislative processes in various countries and that is their legitimacy and that is their necessity, the imperative necessity of having had these conferences.

The challenge, however, is how to bring the various declarations of intent and commitments, which are not legally binding, into legally binding legislation. Hence, the mobilization has to be sustained. And it is this mobilization and the organization-- both together-- that must be maintained, because we sometimes can mobilize, but we often don't know how to organize and follow-through. So, anyway, these conferences have mobilized awareness, have raised the level of consciousness. but they can be dissipated, because of the thrust of those who want to decouple legality from legitimacy.

This brings about another issue. The issue that these global conferences have hit a nerve center in the UN system, as well as in the international legal system. I am referring to the concept of sovereignty. What does it mean? It is this concept of sovereignty that makes the legal predicate of the United Nations in one way or another an obstacle while the whole legitimate pursuit of the international conferences is an incentive. How do we interface the incentive with the obstacle? How do we reduce the obstacle (we can't eliminate it)? How can we enhance the incentive? And how do we redefine the notion of sovereignty in a globalizing situation?

It is here that the ethical component, that the various religious groups and ethical groups, the moral factor, comes into focus. And how does it come into focus as a practical pursuit? Because there is, in our subconscious, also another de-coupling that the ethical is not practical, the moral is not pragmatic, that the ideal is not realistic. Therefore, at the higher level of tolerance, one tolerates the moralists and the ethicists and the idealists. How to factor in this constituency of ethical pursuits and ethicists into the real consideration and serious thinking? This means we have to change the discourse at the level of communication. How do we communicate the ideal to the real in order to move the real towards the ideal? How do we link the ethical with the pragmatic?

So these are fundamental questions, and it brings into the forefront a very interesting challenge for all of us, those who are involved in the day to day efforts of legislation, of lobbying, of pursuits, etcetera. And these constituencies of what I would like to call the "Constituency of Conscience". And to make the "Constituency of Conscience" relevant politically and realistically. That challenge takes a great deal of re-thinking of many of our present day assumptions.

Let me try to think out loud, or maybe feel out loud, for what I am saying is not very structured, but at least it is an attempt to articulate some of our varied experiences. One that we are hearing a great deal of globalization. We hear about the globalization of the economy. We don't hear very much about the globalization of property. We don't hear much about the morally debilitating efforts of free-market concepts. We don't hear enough about the social safety networks necessary especially in the Global South countries and the developing world. That is why it is very interesting for me to witness that certain recent developments have begun to show and indicate a level of sensitivity to this freedom becoming a victim of the market with all the parasitical elements emerging around the free

market. We have begun to realize also that there is among the political consciousness a beginning of an attempt to relate the social consequences of the free market, and address with equal emphasis not only the free marketing, but also the social consequences. In this respect, we have seen, for example, the elections in Iran—a most significant development in the Islamic world. Because what we are witnessing is a polarization and the politics of frustration. In Algeria, where you have a polarity, in Egypt, where a polarity is emerging; but yet in Iran, which is the home of Islamic fundamentalism, women and the youth ascertained their presence within the constraints of the present-day legitimacy there and brought forward, if not the best, then the least bad of the candidates of the Islamic Fundamentalists.

This development goes to show that there is a rational discourse emerging, and this has manifested itself in what Mrs. Clinton yesterday, in a talk at the White House, said the third way. The third way is a recognition of the fact that free marketing, with all of the parasitical mafias that have emerged around it, particularly in Eastern Europe and in certain other areas, and the social corrective, the imbalance that has to be rectified, is brought into a new level of synthesis. This provides an opportunity for (what I am calling now) the ethicists amongst us to submit a text for the discourse to evolve and to influence policies, and at times (perhaps) determine policies.

The third aspect of globalization is that democracy and free market are not inextricably linked together. They might reinforce each other, if the pursuit of the free market is rational, sensitive, and aware of the moral consequences of de-coupling the social safety network from the free market. I think that is a crucial element.

A further element is that we are living in a situation where two historically contradictory forces are intersecting in a very damaging manner. The globalization of environmental issues is the major part, which transcends national, egocentric, parochial loyalties, on the one hand. On the other, simultaneously and with equal thrust is the fragmentation of civil societies and states along ethnic, religious, sectarian, tribalistic, clannish lines. What is called the "failed state" is, in many instances, not the failure of the state as much it is the failure of the society and the break-down of the social fabric. It is in this context that these conferences brought into focus not only the specialized challenges that each of these constituencies, whether the environmentalists or the women, or the issues of social development, or poverty, or human rights, but it brought into focus how we can emphasize the global nature of these "Constituencies of Conscience" to be the catalyst of restoring social cohesion within societies, within the nation-states. And it is here that the Copenhagen conference fighting extreme poverty comes into focus. We have seen the enthusiasm by which the Global South countries emphasize that development should become the focus. Namely, the transformation of societies into relevance in the modern world.

That is why that in the breakdown where religion or sectarianism or ethnicity becomes a focus of commitment, there has been an unconscious escape from addressing the challenges of these globalized issues. It is in this respect that environmental degradation, its economic consequences, and what it breeds in terms of social disintegration are what has ~ to be addressed.

So development means that there must be, in an incremental manner, an "evening up" of the dichotomy which keeps on insisting on governing the world. It is a disrespect that the World Trade Organization has to be looked upon in a much more sensitive manner as to the consequences, and that regulation, although it can be coercive, and that is why economies in the commanding heights have failed, but yet, on the other hand it is important to balance the free economy with the requirements of transforming society. This means that our discourse has to begin to define terms in a much more precise manner.

Let me mention that in the revolution of communications today, there is an instant awareness of what is taking place on the international level. But it is not sustained. Sometimes instantaneous information does not transform itself into knowledge. So, how do

we render the knowledge Content of information? And because of this international revolution of communications systems, because there is not enough core knowledge among almost two-thirds of the world. When they are faced with these new patterns of world culture, many in the developing countries take recourse because they feel they are being coopted without knowing where they are going. Hence, the whole root of Fundamentalism. The familiar religion, which they know, becomes the totality of their political, social, and intellectual involvement, and therefore religions become closed instead of opened to discourse and ecumenical associations with others. It is in that that the religious elements in society have to also protect their own religions from the distortions of frustration that are current.

So, Islamic Fundamentalism, Jewish Fundamentalism, or Hindu Fundamentalism, is of course, the result of someone trying to manipulate, but it is also the result of unaddressed problems, of simplistic answers to complex issues. Therefore, the fear of leaping into the unknown, as we see, leads people to recoil to what is familiar and close their minds and hearts to the other. And then scape-goating becomes easier, the complex issues become chaos, and we are entrusted with managing chaos instead of systems whereby the quality of life is ensured. In this respect, the "Constituency of Conscience," of what all of you here are members, should begin to interpret their ethical and religious commitments not only in terms of asserting their moral high ground and the imperative of these values that they enshrine, but to keep protecting their own religious and spiritual and moral values from those within the religious groups. And that can be done in two ways: One is to involve the "Constituency of Conscience" into realizing that they have to get out the notion that they have to be consistent.

Of Course they have to be consistent, but we have to relate consistency with relevance. There are some opportunists that want to be relevant, have access to power, irrespective of the principles they advocate. And there are many people who are principled who don't want to "dirty their hands" with politics. How do we bring consistency into relevance, not as a contradiction, but as a mutually reinforcing process? That challenge is the moral, dynamic involvement of the soul-searching in which you are protective of the distortions within the spiritual frameworks you represent on the one hand, and on the other hand, to engage the information and transform it into knowledge so that there is a level of immunity and sustainable development. An the interaction among all the constituencies of human rights, and the broadening of the concept of human rights and to render human needs an integral part of human rights becomes much more crucial, and the Global South, in its dialogue with the North, would realize there is the possibility of incremental progress towards balance.

No one says the South has to be on an equal level-- that is not feasible, not practical, not realistic, etcetera-- but there should be an opening so that aspirations that are unmet can be met progressively, incrementally, and in a sustainable manner. These are some of the reflections I thought to share with you. Thank you.

Walter Grazer, United States Catholic Conference, Environmental Justice Program  
Walter Grazer, USCC, chaired the panel and made an initial presentation in which he outlined the activities of the USCC Environmental Justice Program. He noted in particular the difficulty of defining sustainable development and the importance of dealing with the issue of religious pluralism. He saw both of these as a real challenge to the religious bureaucracy. He also remarked on the importance of what Dr. Maksoud pointed out as the constituencies of conscience.

(See written report from Graz by Mr. Grazer.)

Respondents to the opening keynote were are follows:

The Rev. Sanford Garner (with Dr. Rajwant Singh) -- United Religions Initiative.  
Reverend Garner, Washington representative for the United Religions Initiative

(URI). sees this as a moment of both crisis and opportunity. In responding to the question

of what can religious leaders do? he noted three areas of attention: 1) recognition and acceptance of others; 2) respect for life and well-being of others. and 3) renewing a sense of stewardship and mission. There are many obstacles to this effort for which we must be prepared to overcome, He went into the United Religions Initiative (URI).