2004

Blue Planet Prize

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Dr. Gro Harlem Brundtland (Norway)

Chairman WCED (World Commission on Environment and Development)
Former Prime Minister of Norway
Director-General Emeritus, WHO

Air on Gaia:
The earth is wrapped with a robe. Thanks to it, we are able to sustain our daily activities. From some point in time, human activities went too far impairing it. In 2004 the opening film instilled us with a hint to consider the future of the global environment, the ways toward development that enables us to sustain the environment.

Their Imperial Highnesses Prince and Princess Akishino at the Awards Ceremony

His Imperial Highness Prince Akishino congratulates the laureates

Dr. Hiroyuki Yoshikawa, chairman of the Selection Committee explains the rationale for the determination of the year's winners

Hiromichi Seya, chairman of the Foundation delivers the opening address

The prizewinners receive their trophies from Chairman Seya

Dr. Gro Harlem Brundtland

Dr. Susan Solomon

Howard H. Baker Jr., Ambassador of the United States of America to Japan and Åge Bernhard Grutle, Ambassador of Norway to Japan, congratulate the laureates

The prizewinners at the Congratulatory Party.

Profile

Dr. Gro Harlem Brundtland

Chairman WCED (World Commission on Environment and Development)
Former Prime Minister of Norway
Director-General Emeritus, WHO

Education and Academic and Professional Activities

1939	Born on April 20 in Oslo, Norway
1963	Graduated from the University of Oslo in Medicine
1964	Obtained a Maters Degree in public health at Harvard University
1965-1967	Medical Officer, Department of Hygiene in the National Directorate of Public Health
1968-1974	Oslo Municipal Board of Health, later becoming the Director of Health Services
1974-1979	Minister of Environment, Norway
1981	Prime Minister of Norway
	Leader of the Labour Party of Norway
1983-1987	Chairman, United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development
1986-1989	Prime Minister of Norway
1988	Third World Prize
1989	Indira Ghandi Prize
1990-1996	Prime Minister of Norway
1992	Earth Prize
	The Onassis Prize
1994	Karls Preis
2001	World Ecology Award
	Global Leadership Prize of UN Association of the USA.
2002	Four Freedoms Award
1998-2003	Director-General, World Health Organization

Dr.Brundtland holds a number of honorary degrees from major universities such as Harvard, Oxford, Louvain, Cape Town and from All India Institute and the Public Health Institute of Mexico.

The concept of sustainable development has become a universally accepted foundation for countries around the world when they contend with environmental problems today. It was put forward with the leadership of Dr. Brundtland by the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development, and was presented through its report in 1987, *Our Common*

Future.

With aspirations to become a medical doctor from childhood, Dr. Brundtland studied medicine at the University of Oslo. In 1960 she married Arne Olav Brundtland. After graduating from the university in 1963, she accompanied her husband to the United States who was accepted to be a visiting scholar, and she herself earned a Master's degree in Public Health from Harvard School of Public Health.

Upon returning to Norway in 1965, Dr. Brundtland served at the Department of Hygiene in the National Directorate of Public Health and later at Oslo Municipal Board of Health, where she dedicated herself to protecting the health of children. Meanwhile, she continued her research activities in the field of child growth and development.

An unexpected change of career came in 1974 when Dr. Brundtland, at the age of 35, was offered the position of Minister of the Environment. She accepted the post and began to undertake environmental issues. In 1977, while she was in the midst of seeking to resolve various environmental problems including the development of a strategy to contend with acid rain and creating a national park, an uncontrolled blowout took place at the platform "Bravo" in the Ekofisk oil field. Rushing to the site, Dr. Brundtland personally directed recovery efforts, and upon minimizing the environmental damage, actively made information available to domestic and foreign journalists. For both Norwegian citizens and government officials, the oil spillage became a turning point, from which environmental problems became an issue not only for conservationists but an agenda that was central to the formation of national political strategies, and it was recognized that investment towards the environment was a comprehensive investment towards the future of Norway. Dr. Brundtland's accomplishments as the Minister of the Environment were highly recognized, and in 1981 at the age of forty-one, she became the youngest and the first woman to become the Prime Minister of Norway.

In December 1983, the United Nations Secretary General requested Dr. Brundtland to establish and head the World Commission on Environment and Development. When Dr. Brundtland hesitated due to her extremely demanding post as the leader of the Labour Party, Secretary General de Cuellar insisted, telling her that she was the only candidate who had the experience of leading a country as its prime minister after coping with domestic and international environmental issues as minister of environment for years. By accepting the position, she decided to contend with the challenge of protecting the interests of the next generation, facing the future squarely in the eye.

While heading the Commission, she demonstrated unparalleled enthusiasm and leadership abilities, a set of values founded in justice and equality, and an unyielding determination for change. For three years beginning in 1984, she held commissions and public hearings in numerous places around the world from Indonesia to Brazil, listening to the opinions of ordinary people. Her efforts culminated in the publication of the well-known report, *Our Common Future,* in 1987. This report presented sustainable development as its main theme, introducing the concept that development should meet the needs of today's generation without compromising those of future generations. The report further analyzed the structures of a wide variety of problems including population and human resources, food security, species and ecosystems, energy, industry, and the international economy, and provided recommendations of

measures that countries around the world should immediately implement toward sustainable development.

The report became the impetus behind organizing the Earth Summit, or the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. At this Summit, Agenda 21, a resolution to implement specific measures to attain sustainable development, was adopted.

Dr. Brundtland's leadership in the areas of public health, environment, and development has been highly acclaimed throughout the world, and in 1998 she was elected to the position of Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO), becoming the first woman to take the post.

Her numerous accomplishments at the WHO include establishing a support system to enable citizens of impoverished countries to obtain medicine, advancing the eradication of polio at a global level, leading the efforts to curb tobacco consumption through the adoption of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, and creating bold new models to respond to global scale infectious diseases partly triggered by environmental changes such as SARS, malaria and HIV.

Dr. Brundtland, who is a mother of four children, credits her accomplishments to her upbringing and the dedicated support of her husband. Recently, she reflected upon her footsteps through an autobiography titled *Madame Prime Minister.*

Lecture

We Need to Mobilize Global Democratic Action and Responsibility for Sustainable Development

Dr. Gro Harlem Brundtland

Introduction

First let me express my deep gratitude for the great honor to receive the 2004 Blue Planet Prize presented by the Asahi Glass Foundation. I congratulate Dr. Susan Solomon—my co-recipient this year—for her wonderful scientific contribution, a shining example of how science can ensure that humanity makes informed decisions about the environment.

As many of you probably know, the decisive meeting in the long process of working on the report Our Common Future took place right here in Tokyo. I expressed at that time our great gratitude to the Government of Japan for being our host at this important meeting. We saw it as a token that Tokyo should be the venue of our final meeting. By holding our last meeting here we paid tribute to Japan for the steady support for our work.

In fact it was on the initiative of Japan in 1982 at a special meeting of UNEP's governing council that the independent commission was called for by the General Assembly in the fall of 1983. Japan had not only given us very generous financial backing, it had also contributed greatly to our political and intellectual deliberation by providing us with such a distinguished member, the world-renowned economist, statesman and devoted environmentalist, Dr. Saburo Okita.

I believe it is also not a coincidence that many previous recipients of the Blue Planet Prize are institutions and colleagues I have worked with in pursuing a better world, one that is both environmentally and socially sustainable.

I think of the International Institute for Environment and Development, the World Conservation Union, Dr. Bert Bolin, Mr. Lester R. Brown, Mr. Maurice F. Strong, Dr. Norman Myers, and Professor J. Gustave Speth.

The Blue Planet Prize has been an important source of follow-up and inspiration to pursue the crucial goals identified in the landmark report "Our Common Future."

"Our Common Future"

My commission was given a breathtaking mandate for global change:

- Define shared perceptions of long-term environmental and development challenges, and the most effective methods to respond to them;
- Recommend means to foster greater cooperation among developed and developing countries, and to attain mutually supportive objectives taking account of the interrela-

tionship among people, resources, environment and development, and;
- Propose long-term strategies to achieve sustainable development, combining global economic and social progress with respect for natural systems and environmental quality.

Indeed our commission grew out of awareness that over the course of the last century, the relationship between the human world and the planet that sustains it had undergone profound change.

When the century began neither human number nor technology had the power radically to alter planetary system. As the century was closing not only vastly increased human numbers and their activities had that power, but also major unintended changes were occurring in the atmosphere, in soils, in waters, among plants and animals, and in the relationships among all of these. The rate of change was outstripping the ability of scientific disciplines to assess and advise. It was frustrating the attempt of political and economic institutions, which evolved in a different and fragmented world, to adapt and cope. And it deeply worried many ordinary people who were seeking ways to place their concerns on the political agenda.

It was already abundantly clear that the international community was unable to deal effectively with the vital issues confronting us. Throughout the 1970s, the United Nations had dealt with important areas such as population, housing, safe water, and new and renewable energy sources by holding major conferences. This offered hope, but all in all the United Nations system was too weak and fragmented to deal with human needs in an integrated way.

The World Commission on Environment and Development was fortunate to be able to build on the reports of the Brandt Commission and the Palme Commission, on which I had been a member. It was clear to me that after Brandt's "Common Crisis" and Palme's "Common Security," "Our Common Future" would have to be the next step in a major effort to persuade countries to return to multilateralism in an integrated effort to address peace, environment and development.

In the early 1970s, the Club of Rome had presented for the first time how limited resources could set limits to growth. The ecological movement and many scientists had since the late sixties become increasingly aware of how we were approaching limits to the burdens that we could load upon Nature's capacity to absorb the effects of human activities. The Stockholm Conference in 1972 was the first major international effort to address these new threats.

The increasing knowledge, which we acquired throughout the 1970s, was new to our generation. Never before in human history had we had the capacity to destroy the environment and to reduce the options for future generations. Our generation was the first which had to be cognizant of its responsibility for the environment, also on behalf of generations yet unborn.

The South was skeptical of the new environmental awareness of the North, seeing it as a threat to their development ambitions. The North had been developing for decades without showing much concern for environmental degradation and destruction. The developing countries were facing completely different challenges. They were caught in a downward spiral of increasing poverty, crushing debt burdens, deteriorating terms of trade and inadequate access

to world markets. They felt unable to afford the apparent luxury of protecting their own resource base.

Analysis and Recommendations

Our report, "Our Common Future," played its maybe most important role in clearly establishing the link between environment and development. These were formerly viewed as separate issues, dealt with by different institutions internationally and different ministries at the national level.

Many in the past have assumed that the goals of environmental protection and economic development are incompatible, and that the interests of industrialized nations are in conflict with the needs of Third World countries. Our report proved those assumptions wrong. In short, neither environmental protection nor economic development is sustainable without proper attention to both.

Instead, we called for a new era of economic growth, one that must be based on policies that sustain and expand the environmental resource base. We formulated a positive message, one built on greater insight, collaboration and shared responsibilities.

The World Commission managed to forge the basis for a global consensus because we made it explicit that it was only by solving social and economic problems that we could have hope of solving the threats to the environment. We firmly believed that we could not protect the global environment without establishing a more just international economic order, nor provide the basis for a more just and equitable future for all if global trends that threaten the resources base were allowed to continue.

We developed the concept of sustainable development, which means that we must meet the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.

Sustainable development is a political concept for human social, economic and environmental progress. It will require a new era of international cooperation and greater participation by people themselves. They must become more actively involved in political life so that they can have a say in decisions of importance to their own lives and futures. Thus, democracy, human rights as well as practical solidarity had to become the basis of all effective policies for environment and development.

Our analysis led to the call for a strengthening of international cooperation. Only by working together, not against each other, can we have a vision of a better-managed world, better governance, and global adherence to the fundamental principles of democracy, and to the principle that economic and social development must be sustainable. Peace, democracy, environment and development. These would have to be the core issues of our common agenda for the 21st century.

No less than in 1987 we must now fully recognize how interdependent we all have become. We pointed to some disturbing trends. World population projections indicated a doubling of our numbers some time in this century. That increase will take place in developing countries, and unless corrective action is taken this will aggravate the vicious circle of poverty and environmental degradation in which they already are caught. Combined with unsustain-

able patterns of production and consumption, especially in the North, these trends will place intolerable strains on finite natural resources.

In the North we must also recognize that nobody, not even the richest of us, can hide from these global trends. There will be no sanctuaries where some people can escape the harsh realities. We would all suffer from the radiation if the ozone layer would be further damaged. Climate change can cause drought, floods, and disruption of agricultural patterns both in the North and in the South.

Hundreds of millions of people are living in areas that will be affected by rise of the sea level. Toxic substances are traveling with winds and currents, and everybody has to breathe. Pollutants originating in the Temperate Zone are already to be found in the food chain in the Arctic. Clearly we need fundamental changes in the way we use the Earth's crust, the way we develop and use energy and in the way we distribute the benefits of economic growth.

Our security also depends at least as much on economic wellbeing, social justice and ecological stability as it does on military threats. Throughout human history, struggles over access to and control over natural resources have been one of the root causes of tension and armed conflict. We risk a proliferation of such disputes if the rapid deterioration of environmental quality is allowed to continue.

Our future depends on our collective ability to change. We must address issues in a precautionary, integrated manner, and we must deal decisively with all the underlying causes of human conflict and distress.

Above all: Poverty

Above all we must be uncompromising in our determination to eradicate poverty. Poverty is a major cause of environmental degradation in the Third World. Poor people will concentrate on their daily survival. They will be forced to cut down trees, overgraze pastures and overuse farmland in order to stay alive. Poor countries, too, will have to overexploit their natural resources in order to produce the export goods needed to pay for necessary import. When prices go down, they will have to produce more and more basic commodities and extract more and more of their natural resources to pay for goods that they do not produce themselves. This illustrates the great importance of improved rules for global trade.

As we look at the situation in 2004, we must once again conclude: There is no simple solution. Overlooking our growing global interdependence will not be a choice.

Poverty is in itself intolerable and cannot be reconciled with human dignity. We need to oppose any tendency to ignore the fundamental challenges of the continuing North-South divide. Otherwise the very future of our planet is in danger.

Building Consensus

During my leadership role on the Commission on Environment and Development we faced deep political, cultural and religious divides in a number of areas. It applied to different issues such as the safety of nuclear energy. But the most difficult one to overcome was linked to our analysis and recommendations in the field of population, population pressure and human rights, and their links to poverty, environment and development. The fact that in the end we

were able to bridge our different concerns and come up with a shared vision in 1987, I believe created an important platform for change as the world prepared for the Child Summit, the Rio Conference and then the Cairo and Beijing Conferences in 1994 and 1995. There were some very key sentences that we were able to agree on:

Urgent steps are needed to limit extreme rates of population growth. Choices made now will influence the level at which the population stabilizes next century within a range of six billion people. But this is not just a demographic issue; providing people with facilities and education that allow them to choose the size of their families is a way of assuring – especially for women – the basic human right of self-determination. Governments that need to do so should develop long-term, multifaceted population policies and a campaign to pursue broad demographic goals: to strengthen social, cultural, and economic motivations for family planning, and to provide to all who want them, the education, contraceptives, and services required.

We had in the end been able to conclude that social and cultural factors are the ones that dominate all others in affecting fertility, and we also agreed on the following, critical observations and recommendations:

The Role of Women

The most important of these are the roles women play in their family, the economy, and the society at large. Fertility rates fall as women's employment opportunities outside the home and farm, their access to education, and their age at marriage all rise. Hence policies meant to lower fertility rates not only must include economic incentives and disincentives, but must aim to improve the position of women in society. Such policies should essentially promote women's rights.

Today, this basic analysis is of course much more generally accepted, and gradually increasing knowledge and new data confirm it's crucial relevance. I choose to remind us all that what seemed surprisingly radical in 1987, in 2004 has become an accepted reality in global debate, although we must be vigilant to avoid new setbacks.

The Millennium Declaration

Thirteen years after the presentation of "Our Common Future," the Millennium Declaration made clear that gender equality is not only a goal in its own right, but is critical to our ability to reach all development goals. The world is now clearly moving forward as it establishes the values that underlie global development. And when we look at the eight development goals they have strong links to women's lives and to health, and they have of course taken on board the necessity to ensure environmental sustainability.

- Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
- Achieve universal primary education
- Promote gender equality and empower women

- Reduce child mortality
- Improve maternal health
- Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
- Ensure environmental sustainability
- Develop a global partnership for development.

In fact, as I see it, the Millennium Development Goals are a shorthand declaration on the most crucial recommendations put forward in "Our Common Future," a shorthand for how we must pursue sustainable development.

Let me share some observations in key areas.

Educating Women

Although global literacy rates have risen during the past 30 years, women remain less likely to be able to read and write than their male contemporaries do. Of the 900 million illiterate people, women outnumber men 2:1. Illiteracy is worst in Africa and West Asia with 65 per cent of women classified as illiterate compared with 40 percent of men. In many parts of the world, traditional attitudes make it more likely that girls, rather than boys, will be kept out of school to help with the domestic chores and care for dependants.

Yet, repeated studies have made it clear that educating women is an effective way of improving health and income, and protecting the environment. Giving girls the ability to access knowledge, to question and to analyze, and to build their capacity for self-improvement, will help their families and communities. The size of the effect that girl's education has been shown to have on health and fertility outcomes is a powerful argument for investing in girls access to education. Indeed if development is about widening women's and men's choices and a more equitable distribution of resources, the interaction of gender and poverty constitutes the greatest limiting factor to human development. The time has come to look beyond the sexual and reproductive health of women and view their different needs during the entire life span. Equitable access to education, research into gender differences in disease and valuing women's paid and unpaid work are some of the ways we can push for change.

Women's lives are both illustrated by hard work and a lot of work. Statistics that show how men are privileged in working life, and earn much more than women are well known. All over the world an even more interesting picture comes out when you look at the total workload within and outside of the home. Surveys in Cuba showed that women work 20 percent more hours than men. But less than a third of that time is paid work. For the men, the opposite is the case. Two-thirds of their workload is paid work. And we have reason to believe that Cuba is middle of the road. In most countries the picture would be far worse.

Health

Despite the long list of successes in health achieved during the 20th century, the balance sheet is indelibly stained by the avoidable burden of disease that the world's disadvantaged population continues to bear.

Despite the great achievements of the 20th century, successes in health have been

unevenly distributed: 1.3 billion people have entered the 21st century without having benefited from the health revolution. These are the people who are still living in absolute poverty. That is, living on less than US$ 1 a day.

The health impact of this inequality gap is staggering. Despite the rise in average global life expectancy, in the least developed countries, three out of four people die before the age of 50. Infant mortality is almost seven times higher in a developing country than in industrialized countries. A child born in a developing country today runs a 1000-fold greater risk of dying from measles than a child born in an industrialized country. Children living in absolute poverty have a five-fold greater probability of dying before their fifth birthday than their wealthier counterparts.

And tragically, giving birth in Africa is a perilous undertaking for far too many women. Where the statistics are the worst, one woman in every 16 faces death because of poor health and because she does not receive the care she needs when pregnant. By contrast, in most of Europe and North America, such a tragedy will hit only one woman in 4000. No other indicator so starkly reflects the disparities in this world.

And, perhaps not surprisingly – 70 percent of the world's poor are women.

Throughout much of the world; families and societies treat girls and boys unequally, with girls disproportionately facing lack of opportunity and lower levels of investment in their health; nutrition and education. Prevailing gender norms stymie adolescent girls' access to schooling and employment opportunities.

In the worst affected regions of sub-Saharan Africa, women and girls account for 58 % of those living with HIV/AIDS, and girls age 15 - l9 are infected at rates four to seven times higher than boys. These disparities illustrate the roles of girls and women. They are due to sexual abuse, rape, coercion and discrimination. Generally; unequal power relations between men and women lead to widespread violations of health and human rights.

Among the most persistent and pernicious is adolescent or child marriage, sexual trafficking, sexual violence and coercion, and female genital mutilation. Despite an improvement in many parts of the world, 82 million girls in developing countries who are now between 10 and 17 will be married before they are 18. In some countries, the majority of girls still marry before they are 18. In India, the number is 50%, in Nepal 60%; and in Niger 76%.

Providing opportunities for girls to continue their schooling or to earn money helps to delay marriage and improve life skills and choices. In Bangladesh, a secondary school scholarship program for girls, requiring that girls remain unmarried through the final examination, had an immediate effect in delaying marriage. In areas covered by the project, girls' enrolment more than doubled between 1994 and 2001. Trends are improving. The world is learning.

Taking Responsibility in WHO

At WHO I put a key emphasis on the need to get our science and evidence right, not only our health evidence but also the evidence about the interaction between health and development. Led by Professor Jeffrey Sachs, now at Columbia University, the Commission on Macroeconomics and Health delivered a report that will remain a landmark in improving our understanding of how wise health interventions can spur development.

The Commission's report provides a reference for any policy maker – in rich and poor countries alike. It offers a strategy for investing in health for economic development, especially in the world's poorest countries, based upon a new partnership of the developing and developed countries.

Extending the coverage of crucial health services, including a relatively small number of specific interventions, to the world's poor could save millions of lives each year, reduce poverty, spur economic development, and promote global security. These conclusions illustrated my own observations and convictions: We need to invest in people, in their health and education, not only to promote human rights, but to spur economic growth.

Health on the Global Agenda

There are promising signs that policy makers are taking the signal. Health is now on the agenda of decision-makers far beyond the health sector and new alliances have been formed to fund immunization as well as increased efforts against HIV, TB and malaria. This is all well, but it can only be a beginning.

The poor need to increase their investment in health, be it modest step by modest step. The rich need to increase their official development assistance and earmark a real proportion to health. The research agenda needs to change to include a much larger focus on the diseases of the poor. We need a transfer of knowledge and technology to the poor countries. Market mechanisms need to be mobilized and the public sector needs to provide visible incentives. We need mechanisms to safeguard the health and social sector in the ongoing round of trade talks. We already see some headway towards making HIV-medicines available at a lower price, but there is still a long way to go.

Energy and Climate

In Japan, you certainly have experience of the crucial role of energy for sustainable development and you were global leaders in energy efficiency already in the 1970s. The perspectives of climate change are indeed scary.

Following our report in 1987, we saw a dramatic shift in public opinion. This was driven by concerned NGOs, policymakers and experts, extreme climate events and then a masterly crafted scientific consensus process under the auspices of IPCC – the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

Five years after "Our Common Future," we had a global framework. The climate convention was established. That was surely beyond our dreams. Then the 1990s saw an impressive series of global summits, tough negotiations and new scientific reports leading up to the Kyoto meeting in December 1997. Crucially, Kyoto established the basis for legal commitments to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases.

It is impressive, but, unfortunately, it is by no means enough! Vested interests continuously mobilize against progress, negotiators are bogged down in intricate details, and global emissions are increasing.

The world has a long way to go, but a crucial start has been made. Increasing awareness in the world's richest and most powerful nation gives new hope. There is no true alternative to

multilateralism in facing up to our responsibility for future generations and the planet itself. We don't have much time. A number of developing countries have increasing and rapidly growing emissions. Developing countries may soon represent a bigger part of the total than the industrialized world. The future is one of including all countries in our global solutions, but before that can happen, the rich countries must rise to the occasion, show leadership, and take responsibility.

In the last 30 years I have increasingly focused on global issues and perspectives, first as a young environment minister, then Prime Minister, but also as a member of the Palme Commission on disarmament and security issues, as leader of the world commission on environment and development, as member of the Carnegie commission on preventing deadly conflict, and as Director-General of the World Health Organization where I served for five years until July 2003.

Public Health Successes

I was deeply grateful to Japan and to other countries, that 2003 will be an historic year for global public health. Not only did we succeed to agree on the first ever global health treaty – the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, a true gift to the world, a true gift to future generations.

We also faced up to a global infectious disease threat, SARS. It was an outbreak that underlined the crucial role of WHO, and of international health collaboration. It captured imaginations, often more column inches than the war in Iraq, and always, more headlines than AIDS, TB and malaria.

One person infected, staying at an international hotel, put the world at risk. And unlike other diseases which we can prevent or treat, SARS was undiagnosable, untreatable, and, for one of every six people, fatal.

The way the world responded to SARS was global public health at its best. Scientists put aside their differences and drive to be the first, and came together, to share sequencing and study results. Doctors from around the world came together in virtual conferences to share advice on how best to treat patients. Public health authorities from opposite sides of the globe flew to Geneva to share their experiences with SARS, their success and failures with 192 member states at the World Health Assembly. And as a result, in just four short months, we have identified a new disease and contained a global outbreak, which could have become a global catastrophe.

The short sharp shock made us all stand up and pay attention. Due to the speed of science and using the best evidence, we quickly knew that SARS could infect, anyone, anywhere. Governments were committed. Resources made available. People made aware. Health workers given tools for action. Information shared across borders. In short, there was global mobilization to fight a global threat. The result – we probably won't find ourselves 10 years down the road with SARS also endemic in the countries, which can least afford it – devastating lives and economies. Because we acted.

The Crucial Role of the UN

In September 2003, the Secretary General of the UN, Kofi Annan, made an urgent call to the nations of the world, in an address to the General Assembly. Having seen the shared vision at the Millennium Summit 3 years ago, a vision of global solidarity and collective security, he reminded delegates that recent events have called that consensus into question. He announced that he would establish a high level panel to analyze the present and future challenges to peace and security, to consider the contribution which collective action can make in addressing them, and to recommend ways of strengthening international collaboration and the United Nations. I am honored to be part of that crucial process, and have focused much of my attention to the challenges of social injustice, disease, lack of development and poverty. We now need to refocus our attention to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, the common struggle to protect our environment, and the struggle for human rights, democracy and good governance.

Today there are enormous gaps between rich and poor countries. This is an unsustainable situation, for many reasons. They relate to ethical, economical and security perspectives.

To conclude – we need a shift in awareness towards the idea of building global public goods that can help us reap the huge potential benefits of globalization while at the same time containing the risks and vulnerabilities that comes with it.