

DIPLOMACY FOR A SAFER WORLD

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Abstract

New dramatic challenges to diplomacy emerge from coping with man-made and natural disasters. This paper will focus primarily upon the Tsunami in South East Asia and the response of various states and world organizations. It will demonstrate the central role of diplomacy in dealing with natural disasters in general.

Within the calendar of the irreversible process of globalization, the end of 2004 and the years 2005 - 2006 have revealed critical challenges that impose a greater commitment to humanity in terms of solidarity and political will. The period 2004-2006 has witnessed in Southeast Asia a historical show of solidarity in response to the apocalyptic tsunami of December 26, 2004. That colossal catastrophe was the result of the greatest earthquake in 40 years, measuring 9.0 on the Richter scale, with its epicenter at 150 kilometers off the west coast of Northern Sumatra in Indonesia and more than 500 kilometers from the West coast of Thailand. Despite the distance, the giant waves struck with an unimaginable power and left behind destruction of biblical proportions. The tsunami was one of the most devastating natural disasters in modern times. Millions of people have been affected in 12 countries. On May 27, 2006 a new devastating earthquake on the Indonesian island of Java killed over 5,700 persons, hurt over 20,000 and left about 200,000 people homeless.

In a more general context, it should be recalled that from 1980 to 2005, over 7,000 natural disasters worldwide have taken the lives of nearly 2 million people and produced economic losses of over \$1 trillion.¹

Animated by generosity, many states and ordinary citizens from all continents offered a helping hand to ease the suffering caused by these

unprecedented calamities. Bilateral and multilateral diplomacy have had a high visibility in this ongoing humanitarian process. There are encouraging signs that this trend will continue; that countries and peoples will not limit themselves in expressing compassion for victims, but will continue to demonstrate an authentic, proactive solidarity.

The international development agencies most involved in the recovery effort stated that the toughest difficulties still lie ahead, including the complex issues of where to re-establish housing, how to quickly restore livelihoods, and what to prioritize after the immediate relief phase is over.²

While recovery efforts continue to meet the needs of victims, in particular on the Indonesian island of Java, there are many reasons to ponder and reflect on the mission of diplomacy directly or indirectly involved in a tremendous collective endeavor of contributing to the establishment of a safer world during the present era of global vulnerability. Is this not to ask the impossible?

1. Fundamental Functions

It is hard to imagine real success in world affairs, including fighting the consequences of natural disasters, without a responsive diplomacy, as it is the first line of defense for all nations.³ Diplomacy is defined by Sir Harold Nicolson, in a classical work, as "the management of international relations by negotiation; the method by which these relations are adjusted and managed by ambassadors and envoys; the business or art of the diplomatist. "In a more limited definition, the same author considers that diplomacy is "the ordered conduct of relations between one group of human beings and another group alien to themselves."⁴

Diplomacy designates also the use of tact in dealing with people. In this sense, it is a skill which is critically important in the very conduct of diplomacy. In addition, beyond any technical definitions, we should not ignore that in fact "Diplomacy is essentially a human activity whose quality depends on the quality of the people engaged in it."⁵

There is no doubt about the existing consensus that diplomacy is a fundamental means for developing international relations. Diplomacy helps in bringing people closer together, thus contributing to harmony and peace

between nations, cultures, religions and individuals. Understanding between peoples and the promotion of ethical values at universal level are at the root of sustainable solidarity, as promoted by diplomacy. At present, this humanistic philosophy is under a complex test.

Although it relies first of all on negotiation, diplomacy includes other essential functions like representation and information. It involves official representatives and diplomats as well as non-governmental organizations (NGOs). It encompasses not only conflict management but also cooperation, at bilateral and multilateral levels, including international institutions and conferences dealing with natural disasters.

The most important legal document of universal scope on diplomacy is the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations (1961) which in its 2nd article stipulates that "The establishment of diplomatic relations between States, and of permanent diplomatic missions, takes place by mutual consent."

For the present study, article 3 of the Vienna Convention has a particular relevance, as it deals with the functions of a diplomatic mission which consist, inter alia, in: (a) representing the sending State in the receiving State; (b) protecting in the receiving State the interests of the sending State and of its nationals, within the limits permitted by international law; (c) negotiating with the Government of the receiving State; (d) ascertaining by all lawful means conditions and developments in the receiving State, and reporting thereon to the Government of the sending State; (e) promoting friendly relations between the sending State and the receiving State, and developing their economic, cultural and scientific relations.⁶

New dramatic challenges to diplomacy emerge from coping with man-made and natural disasters, as all human situations are complex. A recent example is instructive. The new Holy Father Benedict XVI received (on June 16, 2005) the Letters of Credence of seven ambassadors to the Holy See. On that occasion he said: "our world is faced with many challenges. Our heart cannot be in peace when we see our brothers suffer for lack of food, work, housing or other fundamental goods..." "To help our needy brothers and sisters", underlined Benedict XVI, "we have to face the first of these challenges: that of solidarity between generations, solidarity between countries and between continents, for a more equitable sharing among all men of the riches of the planet. It is one of the basic

services that men of good will must give to mankind."⁷

Normal or traditional diplomacy is conducted by both permanent and occasional representatives via bilateral and multilateral channels. Accredited ambassadors and their staff carry out the daily business of bilateral diplomacy by pursuing their primary mandate of maintaining good relations between their home and host countries. The diplomat's second task is to gain support from the host country for policy positions important to the home state. When diplomats turn to the objective of developing common positions on issues of shared concern, negotiation is the first modality by which this is accomplished. In practice, negotiation is a complex process of combining and harmonizing divergent positions in order to reach mutually acceptable solutions.⁸

If diplomacy in its dynamics is the peaceful instrument of solving one's problems in conjunction with other states, it is also the means of helping other states resolve their difficulties and conflicts. Increasingly, diplomacy has to deal with the construction of cooperative agreements to settle complicated issues, either currently pressing or prospectively impending. Multilateral diplomacy uses negotiation to identify common responses to a variety of problems within the United Nations (UN) system, other international institutions and regional organizations.

Quite frequently, beyond any ambiguity, diplomacy has been used to find and coordinate pragmatic responses to specific problems common to large numbers of states. To do that multilateral negotiations are first of all needed, which differ on substance from bilateral diplomatic processes. The basic task of multilateral negotiation is to manage the extraordinary complexity of international life, so that multiple parties, multiple issues and multiple roles become amenable to generally acceptable decisions reflected in a final consensus.

The humanitarian sector illustrates the fact that official diplomats are now sharing their efforts with a new category of actors. In the post Cold-War era, international humanitarian officials have increasingly found themselves engaged in negotiations with state and non-state entities with whom they may have few common interests, values and objectives. Despite this lack of commonality, many humanitarian actors have been propelled into negotiations by virtue of the mandate of their organizations, which is to deliver emergency assistance and protection to those in need. Whether

it is called humanitarian or disaster diplomacy or something else, the terminology is not essential, as a new form of more adaptable statecraft is clearly needed in order to develop rapid and effective humanitarian activities in today's world.

Beyond any minimalist views, the evolution of international relations illustrates the expanding practice of the so-called "track 2" diplomacy by non-governmental organizations and actors. It reveals the role of domestic politics in controlling diplomatic negotiations and the orientation of diplomacy towards populations rather than governments. Yet, the two tracks of diplomacy have gradually come to terms with each other. Official or governmental diplomacy finds that unofficial efforts can be truly helpful in providing the context and framework for official actions or entering situations where official interference could be viewed as intrusive. But unofficial practitioners recognize themselves that governmental auspices and contributions are always necessary to negotiate and conclude binding agreements, as valid instruments for promoting cooperation in various fields.

Diplomacy proves to have an important vertical dimension, by co-relating the actions of interstate negotiators to the client groups to which they are responsible and on which they depend for implementing the agreements they conclude. The need to take public opinion and the positions of NGOs into account in the conduct of bilateral and multilateral diplomacy increases significantly. This trend is well visible and has been positively anticipated. Authoritative writers believe that diplomacy is condemned to failure if it remains limited to merely state-to-state relations. It should be extended to all "relations between one group of human beings and another alien to themselves," as Nicholson predicted many years ago.⁹

With such a broad and modern understanding of diplomacy, nobody can underestimate the role of all categories of people who contribute to enlargement and diversification of international cooperation: diasporas, students on research and exchange visits, tourists, consumers on shopping jaunts, business-people working with transnational companies, journalists and artists. While this elucidates and adds new meanings to the traditional notion of diplomacy, it also enriches the very environment in which diplomats have to operate.¹⁰

2. Coping with an Apocalyptic Disaster

Speaking on May 1, 2005, to the people attending his first Sunday audience, the new Holy Father Benedict XVI underlined that solidarity, justice and peace should be "the pillars on which to build the unity of the human family".¹¹ These pillars must be fortified by diplomacy.

On December 26, 2004 all of diplomacy's functions entered a new and critical test as a result of the worst natural disaster of the 21st century which urgently demanded a much more articulated diplomacy in action. Thousands of people died in natural disasters as far apart as New Orleans and Kashmir in 2005 and Java in May 2006. In these circumstances there seems to be an emergent need for new conceptual fundamentals for expanding cooperation in disaster reduction, prevention and recovery. This is by all standards a very difficult process, as diplomacy is still operating many times with old or outdated methods of action, while trying to solve far more complex and far more demanding scenarios.

Therefore, some writers assert skeptically that as long as we keep toying with some antiquated notions of diplomacy and humanitarianism we will continue to miss the real mark.

Significant changes are needed in training and educating diplomats. In this respect, among the necessary kinds of knowledge for the education of the future, recommended by the French philosopher Edgar Morin (1999), the following are enumerated: Teach the world identity. Teach knowledge at a worldwide level. Teach the history of the planetary era. Teach solidarity between all the parts of the world. Teach understanding, in all its meanings, between human beings. And teach what misunderstanding is. It is a crucial basis for peace education. Teach also the ethics of humanity, preparing citizens of the world.¹² That leads to mutual understanding.

As pointed out by professor Warayuth Sriwarakuel "understanding presupposes knowledge". In the humanitarian field, no positive action can be undertaken without an adequate understanding of the needs based on the knowledge of the situation on the spot. However, "Genuine or authentic understanding can be acquired only at the spiritual level. There is no way to reach authentic understanding except through praxis with compassion, loving kindness and agape".¹³ This is obviously valid in the field of

humanitarian diplomacy.

Diplomats all over the world were on alert in December 2004 after the terrible tsunami which affected 12 countries. In an article entitled in a symbolic way "Tsunami Diplomacy" released in Washington on January 8, 2005, CBS News Reporter Charles Wolfson wrote that since December 26, 2004, people around the world have been watching pictures of the total devastation brought on by the tsunami. While there was immediate concern for survivors and an effort to rescue and track down the missing, government officials in far flung capitals from Washington to Canberra, Tokyo to New Delhi started to focus their attention on mounting the massive relief effort everyone knew would be required.

President George W. Bush publicly expressed his and his nation's condolences on December 29, 2004, and announced the establishment of the so-called Core Group of nations - the U.S., Australia, Japan and India, with Canada and the Netherlands added later - to spearhead relief efforts. These countries having significant military assets in or near the disaster zone, "It was crucial they get to the right places and not duplicate their efforts", said Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, Marc Grossman.

From the diplomatic point of view, the functioning of this Core Group was very interesting and instructive. Beginning on the evening of December 29, 2004, senior officials representing each country in the Core Group held a daily conference call to discuss the initial relief effort. The US State Department's 24 hour operations center placed a telephone conference call, allowing each senior diplomat on the call to tell the others what his or her country had done and planned to do in the next 24 hours. State Department spokesman Adam Ereli called this "an interesting new kind of diplomacy...It was an intensive and immediate effort, multilateral coordination and disaster relief, at a senior level, that in some ways was virtual diplomacy."

This collective effort was not considered as necessarily breaking new diplomatic ground so much as taking advantage of technologies such as teleconferencing and e-mail. At technical level, in order to help move the daily call forward, each country would also send around one e-mail per day per country with updates since the last call. The e-mails were lists of where each country's military forces in the region were and what they

were doing. The first couple of nights, the calls were all about helicopters, who had them, where they were and how long would it take to get them where they were needed.

Finally, after a productive activity, the Core Group took itself out of business, turning over the medium and long-term relief effort to the UN at a meeting in Jakarta. However, it was recognized that by the action-oriented process necessitated by the enormity of this disaster, the Core Group was able to stimulate international relief efforts with more urgency and at a faster pace than would have been possible otherwise.

What conclusion could be formulated on the basis of this original experiment? CBS News Reporter Charles Wolfson was categorical in his reply. This interesting and promising experiment does not mean that the planners and promoters of grand diplomatic conferences need to start looking for other work. But it should be acknowledged that there are situations, like the tsunami of 2004, where time is of the essence and quick decision-making can save lives. Judging from this case the teleconferencing/e-mail model made correct use of valuable tools and worked well, preparing also the ground for future events. Once the UN took over, one of its first moves was to schedule an international donors conference to aid victims of the tsunami in Geneva.¹⁴

A special note is appropriate about the UN diplomatic initiative of appointing former US President Bill Clinton as UN Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery. On April 13, 2005, the day his appointment was announced by the UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, former president Clinton said: "...the world community did a terrific job in responding to this unprecedented disaster in the immediate aftermath: the Governments, the international agencies, the non-governmental organizations..."¹⁵

On May 17, 2005 Bill Clinton met with leading humanitarian agencies based in the United Kingdom for talks on how to speed up delivery of aid to the hardest-hit survivors of the tsunami tragedy. Bill Clinton and top officials from the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC), "an umbrella group of 13 relief agencies", met in London to discuss how plans are being drawn up to boost spending as the long-term impacts and local challenges of the devastating Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami become clearer." It is imperative that local communities participate in the decision-making process and that the needs of families, and especially

children, are at the heart of the recovery agenda," Bill Clinton said during the meeting.

In accordance with a Transcript of the Press Briefing, in Banda Aceh, Indonesia, dated May 30, 2005, Bill Clinton further explained his mandate: "I'm going to be on the job for at least two years and my primary goal, besides making sure that all the donors give the money that they're supposed to give to the affected countries, is to help solve problems and provide a forum for good ideas".¹⁶

Indeed, good ideas are in great demand. The scale of the destruction and loss caused by the tsunami was a dramatic reminder of the fragility of humankind and of the duty to promote respect for nature as a fundamental value of international relations. Klaus Toepfer, the Executive Director of UNEP, said: "The tsunami in the Indian Ocean taught the world some hard, shocking but important lessons which we ignore at our peril. We learnt in graphic and horrific detail that the ecosystems are not a luxury. They are life savers capable of defending our homes, our loved ones and our livelihoods from some of nature's more aggressive acts." "It is, therefore vital that during the reconstruction of shattered coastlines and settlements, the environment is taken into account along with the economic and social factors," he added.¹⁷

From the perspective of diplomacy there are, indeed, important lessons to be derived from this terrible catastrophe. As all countries and citizens can be affected by natural disasters, international, regional and national organizations have an imperative duty to enhance their coordinated efforts to minimize casualties. It has become clear that risk reduction depends considerably upon effective communication and information sharing by all states. Therefore, the interaction between all competent scientific institutions and national and local authorities must be strengthened.

Diplomacy helps in giving tangibility to the legitimate expectation that planetary awareness is possible. The UN General Assembly, the most representative diplomatic forum, was sensitive to this vital requirement in the aftermath of the tragedy. It adopted by consensus, on January 19, 2005, a resolution initiated by ASEAN countries which had the merit of conveying topical recommendations on behalf of 191 Member States. The resolution encouraged regional cooperation and urged donor countries and international organizations as well as other relevant institutions to

provide financial and technical assistance to countries affected by the tsunami.

There is an indisputable need for the international community to maintain its focus beyond the emergency relief, in order to sustain the political will to support the medium and long-term rehabilitation, reconstruction and risk reduction efforts led by the governments of the affected countries at all levels. In that context, the largest UN diplomatic forum emphasized the need for the establishment of a regional early warning system, particularly for tsunamis, in the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asian regions.¹⁸

This is a capital necessity in light of the most pressing question: are countries really prepared for future natural disasters, irrespective of their probability? There is no definitive answer to this vital question. Implausible implications cannot be taken into account. However, there seems to be consensus on two crucial requirements: promotion of solidarity and active regional and global cooperation. Yet, a most pragmatic question is how to achieve permanent, proactive solidarity and collaboration at a global level in order to reduce as much as possible the tragic consequences of current and future natural disasters?

Thailand made significant contributions to finding valid answers to these questions by its active involvement in the implementation of decisions to establish regional mechanisms for disaster prevention and mitigation, as well as in giving tangibility to the recommendations made by 168 countries at the World Conference on Disaster Reduction (January 18-22, 2005, Kobe, Japan). These recommendations are meant to increase the international profile of disaster-risk-reduction and to strengthen local and national capacities to more effectively address natural catastrophes. The Kobe Conference adopted a declaration stipulating that a culture of disaster prevention and resilience must be fostered at all levels and recognized the relationship between disaster reduction, sustainable development and poverty alleviation.¹⁹

In a similar spirit, the Ministerial Declaration on Regional Cooperation on Tsunami Early Warning Arrangements, released at the end of the Phuket Ministerial Conference (28-29 January, 2005), attended by 43 countries and 16 international organizations, recognized the Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre (ADPC) as a focal point for a multi-node

tsunami early warning arrangement in the region, working together with relevant national and regional organizations.²⁰ That postulates further diplomatic negotiations.

The whole project shall be developed within the relevant UN international strategy coordinated by the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Organization (IOC) under the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

As emphasized by Thailand, an early warning arrangement cannot be based on hardware and technology alone. A holistic approach is necessary, integrating awareness building, education and training, of experts and of ordinary citizens, into the system.²¹ The Phuket Conference welcomed the establishment of a voluntary trust fund to be administered by the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP).

3. Is Diplomacy Prepared for the Future?

Interesting ideas have been formulated on that question at academic level. In a study entitled "Tsunami Diplomacy: Will 26 December, 2004 Bring Peace to the Affected Countries" its author, Ilan Kelman, examined whether or not disasters induce international cooperation amongst enemy countries. The 26 December 2004 tsunami impacted some countries with internal or external conflicts, thereby providing an opportunity to explore how the same event affects different countries in different disaster diplomacy contexts.

Indonesian tsunami diplomacy was used as a case study for further discussion, in terms of both American-Indonesian relations and the conflict in Aceh. Additional work is suggested in the tsunami's aftermath in order to better understand the disaster diplomacy outcomes which are feasible and why they rarely yield positive, lasting results.²²

At non-governmental level diplomatic reactions were immediate and quite eloquent. Ambassador Richard C. Holbrooke, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of Asia Society, at a special meeting organized in New York and Washington D.C. (via videoconference), on January 13, 2005, recognized in a realistic way that: "the reconstruction phase is going to be critical so we intend to be an ongoing effort to keep attention focused on

this after it leaves the front pages of the newspapers. Press attention will recede just as the waters of the Indian Ocean receded."

At the same meeting Jan Egeland, UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, asserted that the tsunami crisis represented a "moment of truth for us as humanity, for international compassion and solidarity and also for the United Nations. The donor nations are now 60 to 65. It is the biggest international aid effort and it is the widest ever... There is an unprecedented global response."²³

At the regional non-governmental level, a significant event was the Asia-Pacific Business Forum 2005, held from 13-15 May 2005 at the UN Conference Centre in Bangkok, with over 300 participants from more than 20 countries. The Forum included a special roundtable session entitled "Coping with economic effects of regional natural disasters." Among the special guests at the Forum was Erskine Bowles, UN Deputy Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery. "The corporate sector's response to the tsunami was unprecedented in its scale and generosity... If that spirit of solidarity can be intertwined with the spirit of entrepreneurship necessary for economic growth, the result could be truly revolutionary", he emphasized.²⁴

At regional governmental level, especially encouraging was the ESCAP High-level Panel on Tsunami Recovery on May 16, 2005, whose collective deliberations represented a common road map towards the medium-to long-term post-tsunami recovery. Discussions focused on three major areas: recovery plans, the status of financial pledges and commitments and progress on the early warning system. Key challenges and ways forward to post-tsunami recovery were identified and outlined. The High-level Panel was attended by ministers from tsunami affected countries, including Thailand, India, Indonesia, the Maldives, Malaysia and Sri Lanka and examined emerging issues in regional cooperation in natural disaster reduction. "We must promote community-based disaster risk management. We aim to link rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts to risk management for sustainable economic growth," said Kim Hak-Su, Executive Secretary of UNESCAP.²⁵

From the financial point of view initial estimates by assessment teams, as revealed by ESCAP, place the costs of reconstruction for

Indonesia at up to \$5 billion and for Sri Lanka at \$3.5 bn. Including India, the Maldives and Thailand, the total reconstruction costs, over the next three to five years are expected to be between \$9.8 bn and \$12.5 bn. \$6.7 bn has already been pledged by the international community for tsunami relief, by donor countries, private individuals and corporations. But of the \$6.7 billion pledged, only about \$2.5 bn has been recorded as committed or paid up.²⁶ Additional diplomatic efforts are needed for financial pledges to be honored, and for recovery assistance to be delivered rapidly and effectively. Adequate coordination and prompt information sharing are crucial components.

The High-level Panel mentioned above has already exchanged available information on national recovery plans and post tsunami reconstruction projects which must ensure that the long-term recovery of the devastated areas be carried out in a way that will break past cycles of poverty.

All these activities will serve as a strong boost to the ongoing recovery process, including work on the multi-hazard and multi-nodal early warning system. To that end, an appeal was launched to both traditional and non-traditional donors to enhance their funding support to ESCAP and the regional institutions. The Theme Topic for the 62nd ESCAP session, which took place in Indonesia in April 2006, was: "Enhancing regional cooperation in infrastructure development, including that related to disaster management". The ESCAP Secretariat expressed its commitment to the production of a cutting-edge analysis and innovative recommendations on the subject.²⁷

In another related sector, the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) Secretariat started a new collaboration with the Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union (ABU), a professional association of 102 radio and television broadcasters in the Asia-Pacific region. The purpose of this new collaboration is to develop new radio and television products to better educate and prepare people against natural hazards in Asia-Pacific countries.

ISDR considers media an essential partner to enhance public safety. The media is the best channel to prepare communities for disasters. It can help educate people on the need to reduce risk by regularly informing on the hazards and social vulnerabilities that may lead to disasters. Media

also plays an important role in convincing Governments and citizens to invest in disaster reduction.

Education and preparedness are the key to reduce the number of people affected by natural hazards. If people know what to do, they can save their own life. Broadcasters have a responsibility to educate people and raise their awareness of the dangers of natural disasters.

As publicly announced, Thailand established a National Disaster Warning Centre (NDWC), linking radio, television and cell phone networks. The first tsunami evacuation exercise was successfully held in Phuket. Around 2,000 people took part, including members of the diplomatic corps. Certainly, to be truly effective, a tsunami early warning system must be comprehensive in scope and cover the whole region, including the Indian Ocean and South China Sea.²⁸

All these diplomatic events reconfirmed the fact that the UN has an unrivalled experience and a unique capacity in all fields of cooperation. Consequently, energetic efforts must continue under UN auspices. With its universal membership, its comprehensive consensus mandate, with a range of activities covering both the normative and the operational components and an institutional presence that is at the same time global, regional and country-based, the UN can be at the very center of this impressive collective endeavor dedicated to human security. The UN initiatives can be cemented by global solidarity. Therefore, all developed countries are being urged never to lose sight of the pressure of the so-called silent tsunamis: poverty, hunger, inadequate access to clean water, elementary sanitation and health care.

Disaster diplomacy might realize its genuine potential in the future only if it is founded on universal values, including, first of all, solidarity. The truth of this value was cogently summarized in various UN documents stating that solidarity and a strong sense of moral responsibility must be the guiding light of national and international policy. They are not only ethical imperatives, but also prerequisites for a prosperous, peaceful and secure world based on true partnership.

Beyond negotiable uncertainties, diplomacy alone cannot make the world a safer place tomorrow or next week. Yet, with genuine political will diplomacy can contribute in the long run to translating the ideal of achieving human security into reality.

In this context, the 14th Annual Asia Leadership Forum entitled The New Leadership Imperative, which took place on 13-14 June, 2005 in Bangkok, brought instructive ideas for the topic under consideration. The Forum attracted an elite gathering of over 400 business leaders and policy makers, including diplomats, from around the world and across the region, bringing them together in a unique, interactive environment that fostered discussion and debate on the economic, political and social issues impacting economic growth in Asia.

One of the debated topics was Effective Risk Management: Insights from the Asian Tsunami Crisis. A number of speakers pointed out that the global economy is now operating in a new world of risk and volatility. The various economic crises, security and terrorism concerns, the collapse of some corporations, have all brought home this fact. And risk is not just about financial factors, but also about securing the people and assets of a corporation. Recognizing and managing these is a very important part of any business. People should draw lessons and insights from what was called the Asian Tsunami Crisis. While the initial shock has worn off and the emphasis is on rebuilding efforts, the ways in which the fallout can be better managed by governments, business and individuals had to be carefully examined. Speakers called for taking effective measures to face the tsunami calamity in the region. Credibility in diplomacy comes with visibility which is dependent on effectiveness. The latter can be judged as such when political commitments are translated into concrete actions at all levels, be they national, regional or international.²⁹

To work toward that end for stronger cooperation in disaster prevention and relief, China hosted the Asian Conference on Disaster Reduction in Beijing on September 27-29, 2005. Its mandate was to identify priority fields for action for the next ten years and push for fresh regional initiatives in specific areas.³⁰

4. Finding the Right Road

The tsunami disaster and other calamities in 2005- 2006 have shown that the international community had insufficient capacity to immediately support people in widespread disaster situations. Diplomats

have reason to be self-critical in their analysis of how crisis management capacity is organized in dramatic circumstances. In this context, in a speech made on January 16, 2005, Laila Freivalds, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden, remarked: "none of us will forget the warmth and compassion, the generosity and solidarity, shown to the victims and the countries affected. It is this that gives us hope and strength to face the future. We must look ahead."³¹

In the same speech it was recalled that as the next major disaster will probably not be caused by a tsunami, but by something completely different, it is absolutely necessary to improve national capacity for crisis preparedness. Moreover, there is also a need to develop the European Union (EU) cooperation in the area as a natural part of solidarity within the EU. Some unanswered questions are not limited to the EU, but seem to be valid also for the Asia-Pacific area. How do natural disasters affect security policies? How to improve the instruments for managing crises and disasters? How can traditional security policy instruments be used to alleviate suffering in natural disasters? And how can traditional disaster relief indirectly help in promoting international peace and security, while traditional, international threats have declined?

What makes countries and citizens vulnerable are threats that know no borders. Conflicts far off can indirectly affect security in quite different areas. The terrorist attacks in Bali, Madrid and New York, developments in the Middle East and the peace efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq show that we are influenced and affected in new ways. The tsunami disaster in Asia shows similar effects despite dissimilarities with regard to causes, actions taken and legal systems. Diseases and epidemics can quickly spread over increasingly larger areas. A holistic approach to security and development is needed. If reconstruction efforts after the disaster fail, security will also be affected. There is a need for a whole range of instruments, structures and expertise, globally, regionally, nationally and indeed, locally.³²

The development of humanity cannot be conceived without a stable and prosperous Asia-Pacific area. If there is an emerging consensus to admit that Asia and the Pacific are holders of the key for a secure future, national and regional institutions meant to help shape it have a crucial role to play. In this respect, ESCAP is called upon to help its 62 members and associate members to develop a robust multilateral cooperation beneficial

to all and to prove that regionalism is a real driving force. It should be reminded that ESCAP is the only regional commission in the world reuniting all five permanent members of the UN Security Council. The area covered by ESCAP is home for the greatest demographic power (China), the biggest democracy (India), the largest Muslim country (Indonesia) and an unspecifiable number of nuclear powers. It includes countries belonging geographically to both Europe and Asia, like Russia and Turkey. The region is vibrant and is growing fast. Diversity is a prominent feature of the region.

An incredible mosaic, Asia is home to most large nations with a population greater than 100 million. Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism and Brahmanism are an integral part of Asian and world spirituality. It offers convincing evidence that all cultures can and must co-exist in harmony. They are able to cast away any prejudice, discrimination or clashes and promote permanent dialogue.

Despite the apocalyptic tsunami of December 26, 2004 and other disasters, ESCAP economies had in 2004 a growth rate of 7.2 per cent, the highest since 2000. The impressive performances of Asia and the Pacific offer to this gigantic area the position of a dynamic economic leader. Yet, this obvious progress is still fragile. The area is far from being a model. Eight of the world's 10 most polluted cities are in Asia. Abject poverty, wide income gaps, under-development's negative social consequences provide a fertile ground for transnational organized crime, including drug, arms and human trafficking. Floods, droughts and cyclones are frequent and dangerous. Some small island states are under a growing vulnerability affecting their very viability and existence.³³

ESCAP, as the main mechanism of multilateral cooperation in the area, has already made a great contribution to the Asia-Pacific economic development and social progress. More remains to be done. As emphasized by Dr. Kantathi Suphamongkhon, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand, South-South cooperation should also be strengthened, including the fields of intra-regional trade and investment. An important role belongs to various regional and sub-regional cooperation frameworks to promote and deepen political, social and economic cooperation, acting as dynamic bridge-builders.³⁴

The Asian Development Bank, the Mekong River Commission, the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation, the ASEAN Regional Forum,

ASEAN plus China, Japan and the ROK dialogue, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation and the Pacific Islands Forum, as well as the Asia Cooperation Dialogue are providing useful platforms to enhance mutual trust and promote common prosperity. A visible readiness for using in a more articulated and better coordinated way all the possibilities for cooperation would be a clear evidence of the ability of the region to withstand effectively the irreversible process of globalization.

From this perspective, ESCAP is called upon to assist with renewed vigor the region to achieve its infrastructure goals with a three-track strategy of promoting technical cooperation in finance, trade and investment; forging greater cooperation among sub-regional groupings to achieve integration and creating a Knowledge Management Center to share experiences of Financing for Development. Moreover, it should encourage the establishment of a regional network of research institutions and universities in the ESCAP region in order to promote education, technical skills development and technology transfer through the exchange of programs, students and academics.³⁵

Animated and guided by the fundamental principles and values proclaimed by the UN, including a full and proactive solidarity, Asian-Pacific peoples have solid reasons for moderate optimism about their collective capacity to successfully face the formidable challenges of a world living under global vulnerability and to give tangibility to their vital aspirations for peace, progress and prosperity.

The practical value of solidarity can be really assessed only in action. Both governmental and non-governmental institutions are expected to bring more convincing contributions in their respective sectors of competence. Multilateral diplomacy may provide useful assessments and recommendations and may facilitate win-win negotiations leading to more attractive, competitive and profitable cooperation. Its practical value should not be obscured.

The UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan in his address to a meeting on "The Business Contribution to the Millennium Development Goals" in Paris, on June 14, 2005, said: "If the Goals are met by the target year of 2015, the world will be a very different place. Five hundred million people will be lifted out of extreme poverty. More than 300 million people will no

longer suffer from hunger. Thirty million children will be saved from dying of preventable illness. One hundred fifteen million children will be enjoying primary education, instead of labouring in factories and fields. Two million mothers will have been spared death from childbirth complications. AIDS will no longer be spreading, but at last beginning to retreat. Africa, the continent most afflicted and most neglected, will be given a new chance, building on the important progress of recent years. Far from utopian, such goals are achievable."³⁶

In September 2005, world leaders gathered for a Summit at the UN in New York, the largest such meeting in diplomatic history. According to Ambassador Jan Eliasson, President of the 60th session of the UN General Assembly, the main task of the practitioners of multilateral diplomacy is to accept, and live up to, the triple challenges of development, security and human rights. The three are intertwined and affect and reinforce each other.

UN is not a panacea or a universal cure. It reflects the collective political will of the Member States and their interest in strengthening the multilateral system. Ambassador Eliasson invited all states to let them be inspired by former UN Secretary - General Dag Hammarskjold's words in his book "Markings" containing a number of philosophical and pragmatic reflections on the need for visions and a long-term perspective: "Never look down to test the ground before taking your next step: only he who keeps his eye fixed on the far horizon will find his right road".³⁷

The commemoration in 2005 of the UN's sixtieth anniversary provided a new opportunity to take stock of both tremendous difficulties and modest progress and to look with equanimity and increased responsibility towards the future. All states were expected to generously pool their resources to work closer together with a view to adapting the UN to the needs of our times and to preparing it to better face current and future challenges.

However, the crucial task of revitalizing the UN is a mission nearly impossible if it is not guided by the fundamental values proclaimed in the UN Millennium Declaration. These are: freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance, respect for nature and shared responsibility. These values are crucial. They should inspire and guide both the bilateral and multilateral diplomacy of the future. Otherwise people will be inclined to believe that

Mark Twain was right when he wrote for humoristic purposes that "The principle of give and take is the principle of diplomacy - give one and take ten."³⁸

The tsunami disaster appears to have inspired unprecedented feelings of global solidarity and generosity. As an imperative prerequisite of globalization, solidarity should permanently manifest itself pro-actively, not just as a simple feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of distant or near people. As a universal value, solidarity is a strong and persevering determination for commitment to the common good at global level and is expected to be operational with those who are directly and critically affected by a catastrophe and who suffer from difficult or unjust circumstances and structures. It should become immediately visible and tangible to those who need economic, political or just psychological support in alleviating their suffering.

Contrary to the conventional interpretation of international life, the face of the diplomacy of the future will be quite different from today. New skills will be developed and new methods found. But beneath it all, tomorrow's diplomat must have the same basic aptitudes that he or she has always needed: knowledge, understanding, sophistication, enthusiasm, and a taste for hard work under trying circumstances. And within the new world of cyber-diplomacy, there is no doubt that diplomacy will not only succeed, but will expand its reach.³⁹

To that end it is necessary to adapt the traditional methods of bilateral and multilateral diplomacy to a world where intergovernmental patterns of relationships account for only part of the policy-making environment. The skills of diplomacy should be mobilized in fashioning an effective multilateralism to successfully cope with problems that no one actor, governmental or non-governmental, has the capacity to manage.⁴⁰

By the document entitled 2005 World Summit Outcome the Heads of State and Government, who gathered at UN Headquarters in New York from 14 to 16 September 2005, committed themselves to taking further action through practical international cooperation, inter alia to work expeditiously towards the establishment of a worldwide early warning system for all natural hazards with regional nodes, building on existing national and regional capacity such as the Indian Ocean Tsunami Warning and Mitigation System. They also committed themselves to fully

implement the Hyogo Declaration and the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015 adopted at the World Conference on Disaster Reduction, in particular those commitments related to assistance for developing countries that are prone to natural disasters and disaster stricken States in the transition phase towards sustainable physical, social and economic recovery, for risk-reduction activities in post-disaster recovery and for rehabilitation processes.⁴¹

The Ministers of the non-aligned countries welcomed on May 30, 2006 the establishment of the UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) and stressed the need to maintain the follow-up, oversight and review by the UN General Assembly of the activities undertaken by the CERF to ensure its functioning according to the agreed principles contained in the relevant UN resolutions, in particular General Assembly Resolution 46/182.

The Ministers expressed concern over the human suffering and economic impact caused by the recent series of natural disasters throughout the world. They encouraged the international community, national authorities and non-governmental organizations, to promote closer cooperation to respond to natural disasters by strengthening emergency preparedness and disaster management measures, such as regional disaster early warning systems, as well as exchange of information.⁴²

In fact, both the UN and the non-aligned movement are pleading for a more catalytic diplomacy able to contribute in a more visible and convincing way to creating a safer and fairer world, an authentic ethos of humankind, where every human being lives in dignity, with real hope of a prosperous future. "The future of coming generations depends on the way we address contemporary problems", stated Haya Rashed Al Khalifa of Bahrain, President of the sixty-first session of the UN General Assembly, which is scheduled to begin on 12 September, 2006. "We should work towards preserving humanitarianism and ensuring that our planet is a safer and more suitable place to live in", she said, thus emphasizing a fundamental objective of multilateral diplomacy.⁴³

The magnitude and consequences of devastating natural disasters have more and more a global human resonance. Affected people can not rely only on their rescue and recuperative capacity. Therefore, diplomacy can contribute to the recognition of solidarity as the guiding light of national

and international policy which must be treated as a universal value. The duty of solidarity is an imperative prerequisite of globalization during the present era of planetary perplexities, discontinuities and vulnerabilities. Diplomacy may succeed in promoting a holistic and multi-hazard approach to natural calamities, placing disaster risk reduction at the centre of regional and global political agendas. This is an urgent and permanent task, as disasters do not recognize borders and calendars. Multilateral diplomacy may help in intensifying the momentum generated in the humanitarian field by recent tragedies and ensure that risk reduction assumes a higher priority on all agendas in order to make the world a safer place.⁴⁴ Development and education models have to be revised so that reducing and managing risk becomes central to sustainable development.⁴⁵ Building safe societies remains a capital objective for all human activities among which diplomacy must have a more prominent role.

ENDNOTES

¹ A detailed assessment of the tsunami disaster was made by the High-level Expert Group on Technical Options for Disaster Management Systems: Tsunamis and Others, which met on June 22-24, 2005, at the UN Conference Centre in Bangkok. See for details <http://www.unescap.org/> visited on June 26, 2005. For the assessment of the earthquake on Java see the BBC report at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/5026680.stm>, visited on May 29, 2006. General data about natural disasters were released by the UN World Meteorological Organization (WMO) at the Symposium on Multi-hazard Early Warning Systems for Integrated Disaster Risk Management, in May 2006. See <http://newsblaze.com/> visited on May 29, 2006.

² For a comprehensive and updated summary of the relief and recovery activities for tsunami victims see <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2005/iha1062.doc.htm> visited on June 25, 2005.

³ One of the most comprehensive academic sources on this topic is *Diplomacy*, Three Volume Set, edited by Christer Jonsson, University of Lund, Sweden, and Richard Langhorne, Rutgers University, Newark, New York: Sage Publications, 2004, 1264 p.

⁴ The quotation is from *Diplomacy*, third edition, Oxford University Press, 1963, as reproduced at www.diplomat21.com/diplomacy/diplomacy.htm.

⁵ The quotation was used by former US Secretary of State George Schultz

in a speech delivered at the Virtual Diplomacy Conference, United States Institute of Peace, April 1997, available at www.diplomat21.com/diplomacy/diplomacy.htm.

⁶ For the full text of Vienna Convention see www.un.org/law/ilc/texts/diplomat.htm visited on June 12, 2005. See also G.R Berridge and Alan James, *A Dictionary of Diplomacy*, Second Edition, London, Palgrave Macmillan: 2003, 296 p.

⁷ All statements of the Holy Father are available at http://212.77.1.245/news_services/press/vis/dinamiche/b0_en.htm.

⁸ For a professional presentation of these aspects see Fred Charles Ikle, *How Nations Negotiate*, New York, Harper & Row: 1964, pp.1-255.

⁹ See note 4 *supra*.

¹⁰ This section is inspired in particular by the excellent study *Dimensions of Diplomacy* by I. William Zartman from Johns Hopkins University. The text is available at www.sais-jhu.edu/pubaffairs/publications/saisphere/winter03/zartman.html.

¹¹ The statement of the Holy Father is available at http://212.77.1.245/news_services/press/vis/dinamiche/b0_en.htm visited on June 19, 2005.

¹² For the conception of Edgar Morin about teaching see www.knowledgeboard.com/cgi-bin/item.cgi?id=114218&d=pnd.

¹³ See Warayuth Sriwarakuel, "Rationality and Understanding Others" *Prajna Vihara, Journal of Philosophy and Religion*, Vol.5, No.1, January - June 2004, pp.134-135.

¹⁴ The full report of Charles Wolfson is available at www.election.cbsnews.com/stories/2005/01/08/opinion/diplomatic/main665626.shtml, visited on June 12, 2005.

¹⁵ The statement of Bill Clinton is summarized at <http://www.un.org/apps/sg/offthecuff.asp?nid=714>, visited on June 15, 2005.

¹⁶ The statements are available at <http://www.clintonfoundation.org/053005-nr-sp-cf-tsu-ts-wjc-on-tsunami-recovery-in-indonesia.htm>, visited on June 15, 2005.

¹⁷ The full text of the statement is available at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=14643&Cr=tsunami&Cr1=visited> on June 15, 2005.

¹⁸ The resolution adopted by the UN General Assembly is entitled *Strengthening emergency relief, rehabilitation, reconstruction and prevention in the aftermath of the Indian Ocean tsunami disaster* and is available at <http://www.un.org/Depts/dhl/resguide/r59.htm>.

¹⁹ All documents of the Kobe Conference are available at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/infocusRel.asp?infocusID=102&Body=tsunami&Body1=>, visited on June 10, 2005.

²⁰ The Declaration of the Ministerial Conference in Phuket was initially obtained by the present author from the participants. Now the document is available at www.ioc.unesco.org/indotsunami/phuket_jan05.htm.

²¹ The position expressed by Thailand at the Phuket Conference is reflected

in the documents available at <http://www.mfa.go.th/web/1.php>.

²² The abstract of the study is available at <http://ideas.repec.org/a/sro/srosro/2005-21-1.html>.

²³ The proceedings of the Asia Society are available at www.asiasociety.org/ and were consulted on June 14, 2005.

²⁴ All documents about ESCAP meetings can be consulted at http://www.unescap.org/unis/sub_unis/press_releases.asp.

²⁵ The essential documentation of the 61st session of ESCAP is available at <http://www.unescap.org>. The most recent ESCAP resolution on the matter is *Jakarta Declaration on enhancing regional cooperation in infrastructure development, including that related to disaster management*, adopted by consensus on April 12, 2006.

²⁶ Statistics on the tsunami were released during the 61st session of ESCAP and are available in particular in the statements made by Kim Hak-Su, Executive-Secretary of ESCAP, at <http://www.unescap.org>.

²⁷ Further documentation about the meeting can be consulted at <http://www.unescap.org>.

²⁸ See Statement by Dr. Kantathi Suphamongkhon, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand, Special Envoy of the Prime Minister of Thailand at the Private Sector Summit on Post-Tsunami Rehabilitation and Reconstruction on May 12, 2005, Washington, DC, available at <http://www.mfa.go.th/web/1.ph>.

²⁹ The 14th Annual Asia Leadership Forum took place on June 13-14, 2005 in Bangkok. The proceedings are available at http://www.dnmstrategies.com/2005_calendar.html.

³⁰ For the preparation and the content of the conference see the relevant proposal at www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/wjb/zzjg/gjs/gjsxw/t195894.htm visited on June 20, 2005.

³¹ The speech of Laila Freivalds, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden, is available in full version at www.sweden.gov.se/sb/d/5189/a/37222.

³² See note 31 *supra* for the source of information.

³³ All data and relevant information are available in the documentation of the 61st session of ESCAP at <http://www.unescap.org> consulted in June, 2005. For updates on the 62nd session see doc.E/ESCAP/L.164 of April 12, 2006.

³⁴ See Statement by Dr. Kantathi Suphamongkhon, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand, at the 61st session of ESCAP on May 16, 2005, available at <http://www.mfa.go.th/web/1.ph>.

³⁵ See the ESCAP Shanghai Declaration (2004) at www.worldenable.net/bmf2004/doc_shanghaideclaration.htm.

³⁶ For the full text of Kofi Annan's Statement see <http://www.un.org/News/oss/sg/pages/statements.html>, visited on June 20, 2005.

³⁷ The full version of Ambassador Eliasson's Statement is available at <http://www.sweden.gov.se/sb/d/3103/a/46337> visited on June 17, 2005.

³⁸ The quotation from Mark Twain is available at <http://www.bellaonline>.

com/articles/art4859.asp, visited on June 24, 2005.

³⁹ See Henry E. Catto, Jr., "*The End of Diplomacy*", article available at <http://hiboard.hitel.net/down/jangkeun/netdiplomacy.htm>.

⁴⁰ These reflections are inspired by an article by Brian Hocking, Professor of International Relations at Coventry University, U.K., entitled "*Diplomacy: New Agendas and Changing Strategie*", available at <http://hiboard.hitel.net/down/jangkeun/netdiplomacy.htm>.

⁴¹ See doc.A/Res/60/1 of 24 October 2005 containing 2005 World Summit Outcome, published in ABAC Journal, vol.25, No.3, 2005, pp.65-66.

⁴² See par. 209-210 of the Final Document of the Ministerial Meeting of the Non-Aligned Countries, adopted on May 30, 2006 in Putrajaya, Malaysia. The full version of the document is available at http://www.e-nam.org.my/namcob/files/outcome/MMCOB_FinalDocument_.pdf. Visited on June 5, 2006.

⁴³ See the press-release containing the summary of the statement made by Haya Rashed Al Khalifa of Bahrain, as President-elect of the sixty-first session of the UN General Assembly, which is scheduled to begin on 12 September, 2006, at <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2006/ga10478.doc.htm>, visited on June 10, 2006.

⁴⁴ See World Conference on Disaster Reduction, 18-22 January 2005, Kobe Hyogo, Japan, Proceedings of the Conference, United Nations, Geneva, 2005, p.5. The UN General Assembly adopted, on December 22, 2005, without a vote, a resolution relating to the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction. That resolution called for a more effective integration of disaster-risk reduction into sustainable development policies, planning and programming; for the development and strengthening of institutions, mechanisms and capacities to build resilience to hazards; and for the incorporation of risk reduction approaches into the implementation of emergency preparedness, response and recovery programs. See <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2005/ga10441.doc.htm>, visited on June 14, 2006.

⁴⁵ Op.cit. supra, p.124. This is a conclusion which was shared by many participants in the regional workshop "*Education for Natural Disaster Preparedness in Asia-Pacific in the context of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)*", held at UNESCO Bangkok on June 1st, 2006, attended also by the author of the present article.

