

Intervention at the Third Round Table

Mr. Jaswant Singh, Minister for External Affairs, September 7, 2000

Mr. Chairman,

We associate with you the spirit of a new beginning, and that, I believe, is not just the most appropriate indeed, possibly, the only approach for the Millennial Round Table.

The three minutes that I have are of course, not enough: but without doubt that is the most effective way of concentrating mind, of focusing on essentials, for sifting the core from the details.

And what is the core?

Simply put, Mr. Chairman, the core issue before the world community is the recovery of human dignity for all those who dwell in this one world, without exception.

We see the ingredients of this irreducible human dignity as the following:

- Freedom from want and the conferring of freedom of real choices, for all the peoples of the world. We must launch a direct assault on that which robs us of human dignity and permanently attain that which serves it. What is that? It is gainful employment, minimum standards of nutrition, health, housing and education. Poverty must, of course, be eradicated, but just eradication of poverty will not suffice and it is quality of life for all humanity that should be our choice. And that is possible only by enabling all to have real choices; by attaining a richness of life, a nourishment of the mind and soul beyond the body; fulfillment of potential as human beings - this is the true goal. In the achievement of this goal we must recognize that we have two responsibilities, a *double key* to the door, as it were. *One key* is domestic responsibility, which we must all acknowledge and see as a trust from our respective people. This requires total commitment to the principles of democracy and participatory governance in letter and in spirit; individual fundamental freedoms and liberties; transparent institutions working for public good; respect for variety, pluralism and gender equality. In short, the citizen to have a real say, as a participant, in his/her political and economic destiny; than for the State to serve as a true servant of the people, and not the other way around. Economic policies based on encouraging the entrepreneurial spirit, equal opportunity, broad based generation of wealth and mutually beneficial partnership with the outside world. The right to govern derives from safeguarding these cornerstones of a just society. As no nation is an island unto itself, *the second key* is an equitable and supportive international environment, as domestic effort clearly by itself is not enough. This, most importantly, requires the provisioning of resources by the more fortunate among us in the volume required; a trading regime that lifts all participants and safeguards the interests of the weaker players; yoking science and technology to developmental challenges through both practical and

imaginative arrangements, particularly the conquest of disease; freedom to national economies in the management of capital flows thus to safeguard vulnerabilities. This is what we mean in the frequent calls that we make to that elusive but key component - political will. The arena where true political will has to be exercised is the United Nations. Political will is nothing more than the will to act with human conscience and sensitivity and a belief in human fellowship that unites us. The millennial challenge is, therefore, one of acknowledging our shared human responsibility.

All of the above is both sharpened and magnified by the mighty forces of globalisation that are upon us. They must be our servant, not our master. Global integration with individual identity remaining intact and in control must be our goal. And we must stop fouling the nest in which we all live. This is not the first time when globalization is taking place. First globalization was the pre-1914 globalization which was much more complete. Born of colonialism and fed by the gold standard led to the first World War. In India, we have a story about three blind-folded men who were told to touch any part of an elephant and to describe it. The one who touched the tail said that elephant was like a snake, the one who touched the trunk said that it was like a hose, and the one who touched the feet said that elephant is like a pillar. Globalisation is like that elephant. We see in it what we want to see.

- **Mr. Chairman, if we are to build a brave new world that we wish to build for ourselves, a second battle has to be fought on what poses a danger to the security of our house, by striving to quickly realize a nuclear weapons free world and to confront the challenges posed by the enemies to civilized living, which are the menace of the new age, whether these be the agents and perpetrators of terrorism amidst us, producers and traders in narcotics, peddlers of the lethal trade of illicit arms or any other subversion by the host of 'uncivil societies' that our world has generated. They are the enemies within the 'House'. This, too, requires the oft invoked political will.**

- **Finally, Mr. Chairman, we must recognize why all the leaders of the world are gathered here, under the umbrella, of the United Nations. It is an act of faith, a reaffirmation of belief in this institution that we have given to ourselves. There is only one UN; it is unique; it is irreplaceable and does not belong to a few only. As President Chavez said, why go back only 50 years, why not 100 years? Why have a system that serves the interests of a few? Why call it the United Nations and why not a limited Assembly? United Nations is not meant only for symbolic acts. We must craft it into the vehicle for delivering on human aspirations, and we must strengthen it in every way that we can - financially, through sustained commitment towards common purpose and action and, yes, Mr. Chairman - through the vigorous expression of the political will of all humanity.**