GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP - THOUGHTS ON A NEW LEITMOTIF FOR INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

SPEECH JOS VAN GENNIP LECTURE
THE DUTCH SENATE, JANUARY 22, 2014
Jos van Gennip Lecture

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INTRODUCTION

On January 22, 2014, the second Jos van Gennip Lecture was held at the Dutch Senate. The lecture was one of a series of lectures named after former Dutch Senator Jos van Gennip who resigned as Chairman of the NCDO Board in February 2012.

The second Jos van Gennip Lecture was entitled ‘Global partnership - thoughts on a new leitmotif for international politics’. Horst Köhler, former President of Germany and member of the UN High Level Panel on the Post-2015 MDG’s, spoke about global partnership as a leitmotif for challenging international problems. Lilianne Ploumen, Dutch Minister of Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation responded to Mr. Köhler’s speech by focusing on the need for global partnerships to end inequality.

The speech given by Mr. Köhler, together with a short biography, is featured in this publication.

We all know that global problems need global solutions. As Mr. Köhler points out, global partnership plays an important role, provided that the nation-state still retains its ability to act. People should be made less vulnerable to the negative consequences of globalization. Information, education and empowerment can help people cope with this fast changing world and make them less sensitive to simple, populist, non-existing solutions. Mr. Köhler also rightly warns that the world cannot afford our Western growth model of ‘Grow first, clean up later’. We, the Western world, must indeed implement another growth model to prevent further disasters, including the lack of resources. Countries need to work together by strengthening multinational organizations and asking more from internationally operating companies and NGOs. They can provide a countervailing power to globalization, and so, I hope, play a crucial role in the Post-2015 agenda.

Pieter van Geel
Chairman of the NCDO Supervisory Board
Horst Köhler served as the ninth President of the Federal Republic of Germany between 2004 and 2010. During his term of office he was not only engaged in the domestic arena but he was committed in the field of foreign issues as well. He advocated a human dimension to globalization with clearly defined rules and was therefore a staunch campaigner for poverty eradication and the African continent.

During his career, Mr Köhler was appointed as State Secretary in 1990 in which position he negotiated the German-German monetary union with the GDR leadership. Additionally, he achieved the agreement on the withdrawal of Soviet troops from the GDR in Moscow. Moreover, he was chief negotiator for the Maastricht Treaty on European Monetary Union, as well as the Personal Representative (Sherpa) of the then Federal Chancellor Helmut Kohl for the World Economic Summits of the then G7.

In 1993 he became President of the German Savings Bank Association and worked to create a modern image of the organization and recognized the particular responsibility of the savings banks for small and medium-sized enterprises and for the social climate in the municipalities.

In 1998 he took the position of the President of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development in London until 2000, when he was proposed as the new Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in Washington, DC. He acted in this position until his election as Federal President in 2004.

President Köhler was a member of UN Secretary General’s High Level Panel on the Post-2015 Development Agenda from 2012-2013 and continues to serve in a number of national and international organizations in honorary positions.

I.

48 days after the death of Nelson Mandela it is quite impossible to speak about international politics without calling to mind this giant of humanity. Nelson Mandela showed the world how peaceful change is possible, and what truthfulness, mutual understanding and reconciliation can achieve. My encounters with him strengthened my conviction that what the world needs is a general awareness of our common interests, and of how we can work together to achieve these. As Kofi Annan put it, ‘As we mourn his passing and honour his memory, the task for leaders and citizens alike is to dare to follow his example – in every corner of Africa and across the world.’ So I wonder: what can we learn from the example of Nelson Mandela?

And where could I better ask this question than in this great city of The Hague, which already in 2012 honoured Nelson Mandela with a statue, a city which has become a worldwide synonym for global justice and human rights, a city which symbolizes more than any other place our hope for a world bound together by a common understanding of what is right and what is wrong?

I would like to thank you for the honour of inviting me into this city and into these sacred halls of your Parliament. It is humbling to hold a speech about an issue as encompassing as the new global development agenda, but it is even more humbling to do so in The Hague.

I stand before you not as an economist or politician, but as a citizen whose work both in Germany and abroad has taught him one very important thing – the fate of the global community has become so inextricably interlinked, in economic,
ecological, social and moral terms, and with such speed, that we urgently need a paradigm shift that at last takes account of this reality at political level. International politics needs a new spirit of togetherness, and a new leitmotif of cooperation. It needs the spirit and the leitmotif of partnership. And I am convinced that this is not only necessary, but also possible.

Let us step back and consider the world as it is at the start of the 21st century: in 1943, the year I was born, the total population of the world was 2.3 billion. In my lifetime this figure has more than tripled; today there are more than 7.1 billion people in the world. When my son is as old as I am today, in the middle of this century, the world will be home to more than 9 billion people. And not only are there more and more of us, we are also living longer: in 1950, when I had just started school, only 1% of the world’s population had a life expectancy of over 70 years. Today 57%, more than half of the people of the world, can expect to live this long. This trend is the reflection of an incredible economic and social transformation: 2 billion people around the world already belong to the global middle class, and by 2030 another 3 billion people are set to join them. The economic net that spans the world is becoming more and more finely meshed and over the last few decades this has made possible the greatest surge in prosperity the world has ever seen.

But that is only half the story. Charles Dickens began his novel A Tale of Two Cities with the now legendary words, ‘It was the best of times, it was the worst of times’. Is that the motto of this millennium? The following facts and figures are also part of the great global panorama at the start of the 21st century: today, about one billion people still live in absolute poverty; one eighth of all people around the world still go to bed hungry every evening; almost one sixth of all children are still undernourished. The global gap between the extremely poor and the extremely rich is actually widening. Only the day before yesterday, Oxfam published new calculations that the richest 85 people on this planet own as much wealth as the poorest half of the world population. And since the beginning of this still young century, natural disasters have caused more than 2.5 trillion dollars worth of damage; damage which unproportionally hits poor countries.

Can anybody believe that this situation is tenable?

Now, we could of course say, ‘What is the problem? There has always been poverty and inequality. Let’s be happy about the progress made. We can tweak a little here and fine-tune a little there in our development policy, and just carry on...’

There are two fundamental points I would like to make against this kind of attitude.

First, we are currently experiencing a technological revolution, which, driven by the internet, is making it easier to access information around the globe. The poor people of our world are better networked with the rest of the globe than ever before thanks to television and the internet. Although only 4.5 billion people have access to a toilet, 6 billion have access to a mobile phone. This means that global differences, and the advantages of a comfortable western lifestyle, are plain for all to see, and most people find the latter attractive. But we can also see much more clearly in the opposite direction. When a factory in Bangladesh collapses, as it did last April, and 1,129 people lose their lives – people who worked for a pittance under inhuman and degrading conditions to sew clothes for us western consumers – the images of the dead flicker across our flat-screen TVs; the background is shared on Facebook and nobody can claim that they didn’t know anything about it. When 359 people are fished out of the sea dead off the coast of Lampedusa, after drowning on the way to the promised land of Europe, we cannot see on our screens the shame that European leaders should feel in the face of their failure, but we can see the bodies – and nobody can claim that they didn’t know anything about it. Technological developments are making the stark contrasts that exist in our world plain to everybody, to those who reap the benefits and to those who suffer the consequences. The technological and social net that spans the world is becoming more and more finely meshed.

Secondly, the rise of the global middle class will bring our planet to the brink of disaster if we continue to follow traditional growth patterns. The demand for natural resources has never been so high. To meet the needs of the world’s ever growing population, we will need 30% more water, 40% more energy and 50% more food by 2030. Every year we lose about 13 million hectares of forest, mostly to provide more farmland, which is impacting massively on the global ecological balance. The historically unique scale of loss of biodiversity brings with it risks we can only begin to imagine. And if we are really to limit global warming to a rise of two degrees Celsius, between now and 2050 we cannot emit more than about 750 billion tonnes of CO2 from fossil fuels into our atmosphere. But even if we were to keep emissions at today’s level, we would exceed this limit by 2040. If we are to meet the target, we must cut emissions drastically, rather than increasing them as we have done to date.
Everything then leads to the question – on what kind of substance should this growth be based that brings us closer to the vision of a world of “prosperity for all”? Our modern lifestyle is coming up against its limits. Climate change, perhaps the single largest problem we will leave to our children, is above all the greatest market failure in the history of mankind – because the individuals and the companies responsible are not called on to pay for the damage they have caused. In our ever smaller world there are fewer and fewer opportunities to pass on the consequences of our actions to other countries or future generations. If the entire world were to use resources and energy at the same rate as we do in Europe, we would need four planets in reserve. And, in the same way that decisions taken in the USA and Europe have devastating ecological impacts on the rest of the world, in the very near future decisions taken in China, India and Brazil will have massive impacts on us. The ecological net that spans the world is becoming more and more finely meshed.

As Jürgen Habermas put it, the world has long been condemned to be an ‘involuntary community of shared risks’. Yet in spite of all economic, technological and ecological interconnectedness, it is clear that the political response lags far behind developments, and that our politics is hardly able to manage and shape our globalised world.

II.

Over the past year I have been reflecting on many of these issues along with 26 other individuals from around the globe. In August 2012, Ban Ki-moon, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, appointed us to the High Level Panel on the Post-2015 Development Agenda. We were charged with drawing up an initial proposal for a ‘bold and practical’ development agenda beyond 2015, an agenda that will be both a follow-up framework to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and a framework for the Sustainable Development Goals that states committed to develop in the Rio+20 process.

After months of consultations, discussions and dialogue with civil society, the academic and research community and the business community, we submitted a report to the United Nations Secretary-General laying out our proposals for a post-2015 development agenda. Although views diverged on some details, we all agreed that ‘business as usual’ is not an option, and that the enormous challenges of the 21st century call for a radical transformation of economies and societies across our planet. That means that the post-2015 agenda must be a universal agenda, with goals that apply to all nations; developing countries, emerging economies and industrialised states.

We believe that five big transformative shifts of attitude and action are necessary to drive global change.

1) Leave no one behind. We must ensure that no person – regardless of ethnicity, gender, geography, disability, race or other status – is denied basic economic opportunities and human rights.

2) Put Sustainable Development at the Core. We must make a rapid shift to sustainable patterns of production and consumption, with developed countries in the lead. We must act now to slow the alarming pace of climate change and environmental degradation, which pose unprecedented threats to humanity.

3) Transform Economies for Jobs and Inclusive Growth. A profound economic transformation can end extreme poverty and promote sustainable development, improving livelihoods, by harnessing innovation, technology, and the potential of business. More diversified economies, with equal opportunities for all, can drive social inclusion, especially for young people, and foster respect for the environment.

4) Build Peace and Effective, Open and Accountable Institutions for All. Freedom from violence, conflict, and oppression is essential to human existence, and the foundation for building peaceful and prosperous societies. We are calling for a fundamental shift – to recognise peace and good governance as a core element of wellbeing, not an optional extra.

5) Forge a new global partnership. And that brings me to the title of my lecture. We asked whether we need a new paradigm for international politics, whether we need a leitmotif for the post-2015 development agenda that at last takes account of the strong interconnectedness of our planet. After many spirited and often controversial discussions, the answer of our Panel was clear and unanimous: yes, we need a new paradigm in international politics. In other words, we need more than just a new or different list of development goals. The Panel agreed that the post-2015 agenda must be underpinned by a new spirit of solidarity, cooperation for mutual benefit and mutual accountability. This spirit must be based on a common understanding of global ethics. We term the political realisation of this spirit the ‘global partnership’. It is based...
on two principles: firstly, national policies must be designed and implemented in light of the global common good. Secondly, and conversely, national governments must identify multilateral solutions to many problems that affect them at local level but can only be addressed at international level. These two principles must be the common thread running through all political action in the 21st century – as new leitmotif of international politics, as global partnership.

Allow me at this point to give you a little insight into the discussion process within the High Level Panel, and more concretely into a discussion I had at our third meeting, which took place in Bali, with your countryman and Unilever CEO Paul Polman, who was a great and productive member of our group. In our Bali debate, we first didn’t quite understand each other, as I was talking about “global partnership” and Paul about “global partnerships”. Together we discovered what difference a single letter can make, and finally agreed: Global partnership – without the s – is a principle, a spirit, a leitmotif. Global partnerships – with the s – are one form of implementation of that spirit, with concrete project-based partnerships between different actors, including the private sector, working towards a specific common goal. Some of these multi-stakeholder partnerships have already been very successful, like the GAVI-alliance (Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation), which is on track to immunise 250 million children in 73 of the world’s poorest countries by 2015.

On the basis of the five big transformative shifts laid out by the Panel, we identified 12 illustrative goals, which specify what the international community should achieve by 2030. Each goal has certain targets, for which various indicators have been drawn up; these can be used to measure the extent to which the goal has been achieved. The report produced by our Panel (which is available online) is to be used to stimulate discussion in intergovernmental negotiations on the post-2015 agenda. The United Nations General Assembly is to make a final decision next year.

III.

Now, you might say: Is ‘global partnership’ not utopic, a beautiful vision, the reflection of forced optimism, all in all entirely unrealistic and thus incapable of carrying us forward? Or, even worse, does this sort of rhetoric not seek to mask the actual asymmetries in the world? Is it more than a verbal fig leaf for the strong, behind the cover of which they can pursue their old power politics (just take a look, for example, at the recent NSA scandal or the rearmament in China)? I must admit, these are all concerns that have gone through my mind too. That is why I jotted down my thoughts on this new leitmotif, and I am delighted to have the opportunity to share them with you here today. I can start by telling you the conclusion I came to: I firmly believe that the global partnership is not the brainchild of naïve idealism. No, it is a demonstration of realpolitik because there is no other way we can resolve our problems.

My deliberations start with the assumption that our politics, in Germany, Europe and throughout the world, is still based on a political conception of the world that is now far removed from reality, and that this fundamental misunderstanding is an obstacle to genuinely cooperative policies. I have therefore focused my thoughts about a global partnership on four key concepts of politics: sovereignty, legitimacy, national interests and common values.

Let us look first at sovereignty. Even the muscle-flexing of power politics, as waning and emerging superpowers attempt to leave their mark on the global stage, can hardly conceal the fact that the sovereignty of the nation state, defined as the absolute state monopoly over the use of force within a given territory, combined with the absolute freedom from intervention by any other state, is increasingly becoming an illusion. Open markets, open societies, open technologies and an open biosphere transcend even the best protected national borders. Pandemics, natural disasters, international terrorism, migration, climate change, international financial crises, world trade – you name it... the greatest global problems can only be addressed at a level above that of the individual nation state.

Alongside the empirical view, a normative perspective exists. The erosion of the sovereignty of the nation state that we can observe is not only the manifestation of growing global interconnectedness, but also the result of the moral pressure that is increasingly coming to bear on the principle of sovereignty. We need only think back 20 years to Rwanda and Srebrenica, where sovereignty – in terms of the right to non-intervention by external forces – was abused to cover up genocide and offered as a cheap excuse for the failure of the global community to take action. On the basis of this bitter experience, an understanding of sovereignty as responsibility has emerged, based on two fundamental premises: firstly, only states which respect and protect the fundamental rights of their citizens may invoke full sovereignty, and secondly, the responsibility to protect the population will be transferred to the international community if a state cannot or will not meet this responsibility, which can as a last resort entail the duty to intervene militarily. In 2005 this concept was recognised by the heads of state and government present at the General Assembly of the United Nations. This marks a
radical shift in the way states understand sovereignty – even if this is the point that sparks the most controversies, and although we are still a long way from answering all questions, including the danger of arbitrary action or the interests of power politics linked to military intervention. I cannot explore the concept of ‘responsibility to protect’ in detail here today, but I believe that this discussion is necessary and that it can generate important impetus in efforts to define state sovereignty in this millennium.

Should we not push further the idea of ‘sovereignty as responsibility’ and look at it in a more comprehensive context? In our interconnected world, states today have a responsibility not only towards their own citizens, but also towards the global community. They ought then to be required to exercise their sovereignty in such a way that it does not have any adverse impact on the sovereignty or liberty of other states. This would imply that sovereignty would have to help protect and provide – rather than undermine – global public goods, including the environment and security. As Jürgen Habermas put it, ‘in this interdependent global society, congruence between those acting and those affected is increa singly rare.’ Perhaps a state can only claim full sovereignty if this congruence is achieved in full. Where it does not exist, for instance in climate policy, the old logic of sovereignty as a blank cheque for nation states can no longer apply.

Is the departure from the traditional understanding of the sovereignty of the nation state not equivalent to capitulation, a tacit realisation that a state cannot take action? Forced to their knees by the dynamics of globalisation, should nation states effectively commit suicide because they fear death? No. It is not a question of ‘scaling back the state’. The paradox of sovereignty in the 21st century could be that, by relinquishing certain sovereign tasks or sharing these with other states, the nation state in fact retains its ability to act. Climate policy is the best example. Any discussion of a new understanding of sovereignty must, however, demonstrate an appropriate level of respect for the cultural diversity of different peoples.

Perhaps the most controversial aspect of a new understanding of sovereignty is the legitimacy of political decisions in the international context, and I freely admit that I too am still seeking a satisfying answer here. This century, at least, there will be no world government to resolve our global problems, no global Leviathan, and I resoundingly reject the authoritarian phantasies of many critics that sparks the most controversies, and although we are still a long way from answering all questions, including the danger of arbitrary action or the interests of power politics linked to military intervention. I cannot explore the concept of ‘responsibility to protect’ in detail here today, but I believe that this discussion is necessary and that it can generate important impetus in efforts to define state sovereignty in this millennium.

Legitimacy, though, is not only a question of the process – of how a decision is made – but also a question of the substance. And that brings us to the next key concept in my thoughts on the leitmotif of the global partnership – national interest.

One of the greatest obstacles to achieving a world in which cooperative solutions shape the future is, I believe, an incorrect or at least obsolescent understanding of national interest, which self-acclaimed ‘realists’ see as the driving force behind egoistic state actions. They see the world as an ocean on which every state rows its own boat, while international politics is charged with ensuring that everybody can row unhindered and that the boats do not collide.

Yet I believe: we are all in the same boat, and have been for some time. But so many people in the boat are so busy defending and taking care of their own oars that nobody can or wants to deal with the leak that is plain for all to see in the middle of the boat ...

The following simple conclusion makes the 21st century so fundamentally different from all previous centuries: in our interconnected world there is less and less a national interest that is worth defending against other nations in the long term. There are, of course, very real conflicting interests, and these will always exist. However, we would be making excellent progress if we could recognise two things: firstly, conflicting interests along nationally defined lines are becoming increasingly rare. The winners and losers in the wake of certain decisions are not entire states and entire populations, but specific groups or branches of industry within these states. Any actor blocking a cooperative global solution in the name of national interests is often acting against a great many interests within that nation. Secondly: in the 21st century, most conflicting interests are not between 

seriously, we must strengthen it and develop it, because the global partnership will be all the stronger in the long term the more it builds on the primacy of law between peoples. Over and above this, we must become cleverer and more innovative in the development of solutions where international cooperation and national policies intermesh and inspire one another – one example could be the post-2015 agenda as a framework for common objectives of the international community with substantial voluntary national inputs. And finally, we can help enhance the legitimacy of global politics by raising the quality of global discourse, involving more people, and making the various consultation and decision-making processes more transparent.
‘us’ and ‘them’, but between us and our grandchildren, between short-term and long-term interests. In the long term our fates are so inextricably linked that the further we look into the future, the more the interests of different countries converge. No country, no matter how rich and powerful it is, can maintain its prosperity in the long term if it fails to take into account the prospects and wellbeing of other countries.

When I talk about the global common good and global interests, I do not mean everyone agreeing on everything, or an ominous globe-spanning volonté générale, a general will which we must all accept and then everything will be all right. There are always going to be divergent objectives, and dilemmas; they are one of the fundamental constants in politics. A concept of global partnership does not attempt to negate these conflicts. Rather our aim must be to lend greater weight to the global, long-term perspective, and to make sure this standpoint is heard. To put it another way, it is not the fact that conflicting objectives exist that is the problem, but the way we deal with them. And it would be a huge step forward if the trade-off between today and tomorrow were clearly stated when decisions are made, if we openly presented our own interests and perceived the concerns of others as legitimate interests, and if we dealt more openly with the question as to who are the winners and who are the losers of certain decisions – and I mean both in the short and in the long term. If we create space for openness, honesty and mutual understanding, cooperation and partnership can grow. I am convinced that, if we deal more openly with conflicting objectives, political ingenuity and the spirit of technical innovation of the human race can reconcile a great many apparent contradictions, and identify solutions that are sound in both the short and the long term.

And that brings me to my fourth key concept, the global values that are to underpin the global partnership. Now, having looked at interests, we could maybe draw a line under our deliberations and say that a policy of global partnership is in our own interests; it is quite simply the most rational option. I do not believe that this goes far enough, however. The global partnership should be based on a set of common values. The enormous political challenges facing us can, in my opinion, only be mastered if we have a moral power and clear concepts behind the reasons for taking a united path and the goal we are aiming for. This calls firstly for an ongoing dialogue between different cultures on the shared foundations of humanity, and secondly for more self-critical reflection on the values which we claim guide our actions.

In terms of the first of these, German theologian Hans Küng has carried out some invaluable work with his concept of a global ethic. I would like to quote from the declaration “Towards a Global Ethic” of the 1993 Parliament of the World’s Religions in Chicago: ‘We affirm that a common set of core values is found in the teachings of the religions, and that these form the basis of a global ethic. We affirm that this truth is already known, but yet to be lived in heart and action.’ The two principles which underpin the global ethic are humanity (every individual has the right to be treated humanely) and reciprocity (we must treat others as we wish others to treat us – the Golden Rule).

I am certain that even just making the effort to understand the point of view of others can carry us forward, and inviting speakers from other countries to lectures like these is in my view an idea that should be copied more often. But we need even more. If we are to become more than just a world community forced by circumstances into solidarity – if a genuine global awareness is to emerge – then our interconnected global family must urgently develop a collective empathy on the basis of shared values. It is my hope that the new media in particular can bring us closer than ever to this awareness.

A second precondition is, however, that we take a self-critical look at our own actions, and that we change these where necessary. It will not come as a surprise to any of you that I also see the West deep in debt in this regard, with its proclivity to preach human rights and universal values. I don’t refer here only to such dramatic examples of hypocrisy as Guantanamo and Lampedusa, which are so blatantly at odds with western rhetoric; I also mean our entire unsustainable lifestyle. If we apply Kant’s categorical imperative to our own times, it would read, ‘Live such that your lifestyle could be adopted by all people on our planet.’ Or, put differently: sustainability means living in such a way that we will leave our children the same degrees of freedom that we cherish today. The reality is, though, that it takes for example four litres of water to manufacture a one-litre plastic water bottle, while 2,700 litres of water are needed to make one bar of chocolate. In view of the fact that currently one billion people have no access to safe drinking water, this should of course outrage our sense of justice. But more importantly, it would be quite impossible for the entire human race to use natural resources at this rate – think back to the four planets ... The German-American philosopher Vittorio Hösle wrote that, since universalism is the principle of modern ethics, the fact that our lifestyle cannot be universalised can only mean – measured by the very own criteria of modernity – that it is immoral. This is in no way intended as a criticism of universal values, only of the fact that
our lifestyle so blatantly contradicts these values. Not only does this rob us of credibility in the global dialogue, it also jeopardises our entire future. Because in view of the economic and ecological interconnectedness of our planet, the genuine adoption of a global ethic based on humanity and reciprocity, and thus the realisation of universal ideals, has become a question of survival.

IV.

Ladies and gentlemen, those then were my musings on how we must continue to refine our understanding of the concepts of sovereignty, legitimacy, interests and values to pave the way for a global partnership. What I have said here should not be taken as a blueprint of how to save the world, or as a panacea for all global problems. There is no silver bullet. But I don’t want to take the easy way out with an excuse like this, either. I would like to share with you three brief ideas as to how we could help achieve a breakthrough for this new leitmotif of a global partnership.

Thought number one: Perhaps the most valuable resource in international politics is not oil, or water, or cash – it is trust. Trust is the foundation on which every partnership is built, whether within a family, in business or between nations. I think that decision-makers still massively underestimate the importance of this resource, and that they invest far too little in trust. Without more trust, the global partnership cannot work. But what generates trust? Credibility and fairness. A culture of fairness that applies to the big and the small alike, and ensures that states too respect the Golden Rule, this would be a valuable start to generating more trust. Nothing kills more trust than the double standards we see everywhere in international politics. Credibility, which generates trust, thus includes the admission of our own shortcomings and an open dialogue about our own interests; perhaps we could term this ‘political truthfulness’. This is not always easy, and sometimes it is painful, but the trust gained is all the more productive for that. Let us not give up the hope – and the work to realize this hope – that more political truthfulness is possible.

My second thought follows on from this first one: trust is good, but so are institutions. Institutions provide a framework within which trust can grow, or they at least offer a context within which reciprocal control can be exercised where mistrust reigns – because this is obviously sometimes going to be the case. Now, there is a lot that could be said about the entire structure of international institutions, but I would like to look at only one institution here – the United Nations. For all its shortcomings, it is the only place in the world where the entire international community meets, where the wolf dwells with the lamb, where even North Korea has a seat. The United Nations must be the heart, and perhaps also the brain of the global partnership. To this end, though, the UN itself will have to become more credible and more effective. Many of the reforms that have been proposed have been on the table for some time; some were already cited in the Millennium Declaration in 2000. These include, for instance, a reform of the Security Council, strengthening the United Nations Environment Programme and undertaking a radical spring clean of the fifty or more special organisations and sub-organisations of the United Nations, some of whose mandates are as entangled and overlapping as a bowl of spaghetti. A credible and self-confident UN could help make global regulations more binding, but part of its charm is also that it could open doors and, even more importantly, open eyes to the shared interests of the human race. The United Nations as a constitutive, creative force for a new spirit of partnership – that is a vision worth investing in!

The process towards a post-2015 agenda and new global, sustainable development goals could prove a great blessing. If we manage, within the scope of this process, to generate new trust in one another, to lend credibility to our joint efforts, and to awaken a new awareness of the global perspective, a lot will have been achieved – quite apart from the achievement of specific objectives.

My third thought about how to pursue global partnership is about another kind of partnership: the European Union. For sure, the crisis is not yet over – and I am not only talking about the economic crisis in Europe, but also about its institutional and identity crisis. Despite all the positive signs, it will demand tremendous political courage and a lot of political capital to steer the European project towards a good future. But I am convinced that we can summon up this courage – first, if we open ourselves to new thinking, and second, if we sharpen the sense for our history: Europe is a story of crisis overcome. Europe is also a story of values, of trust, of cooperation. And in that, Europe is still a story that inspires. So my hope is that European policy-making will play an active and credible role in developing this new global partnership. I hope that we do not merely consider the benefits to our own country and to Europe but seek to link these concerns with the aspiration to achieve peace, development and the preservation of creation throughout the world. To name an example: let us finally fix our EU Emissions Trading System, which was an important step towards the pricing of carbon, arguably the most crucial entry into a process of decarbonizing our economies. While it is currently failing terribly, we could now prove that trial and error can lead to a success which could be exemplary to other regions. At any
rate, I hope that the EU actively engages in the global debate about the post-2015 agenda. The Africa-EU summit in April could be a great possibility to show the world that we are serious about a universal framework of sustainable development goals. I still believe in a courageous Europe that rises to the challenge of the needed transformation, and in doing so demonstrates that the European model is alive and well, and continues to be avant-garde.

V.
Ladies and gentlemen,
Charles Dickens’ novel A Tale of Two Cities continues, ‘It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness’. I will leave it up to you to decide whether the vision of a global partnership as proposed by the High Level Panel and as I have tried to explore it here today, is wise or foolish. But I would not be standing in front of you today if I were not utterly convinced that it is feasible, that wisdom can prevail over foolishness, long-term reason over the temptations of short-term satisfaction, imagination over a lack of ideas, the courage to be truthful over the comfort of hypocrisy, the common good over egoism, clever questions over over-hasty answers.

I am very well aware that it is not an easy task. I would like to quote one of my colleagues on the Panel, Tawakkol Karman, the courageous human rights activist and Nobel Peace Prize laureate from Yemen, who in her speech on presenting the report to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said, “governments will have to choose whether they adopt this new paradigm of global partnership. The temptation for political leaders to pull back, to retreat to a safer, more conventional approach, will be strong.”

We can all contribute to resist this temptation.
The Jos van Gennip Lecture in the Dutch Senate

The Jos van Gennip Lecture is a series of lectures named after former Dutch Senator Mr. Van Gennip, who resigned as Chairman of the Board of NCDO in February 2012. The lectures are organized by NCDO and ISS as a token of appreciation for Van Gennip’s commitment and invaluable contribution in the fields of international development cooperation and global sustainable development.

The aim of the lectures is to provide an impetus to the Dutch public debate and policy by placing current developments in the international global development debate in a Dutch context. The lectures cover topics on international cooperation and sustainable development. Specifically, it focuses on analyses of (global) social, economic and ecological developments and their impact on the Dutch international cooperation and global sustainable development policies.