

**“Unfinished Business: Effective Partnerships for Human Security and Sustainable  
Development  
DPI/NGO Conference, United Nations, New York, September 6-8, 2006**

**Plenary Panel Discussion on “Moving Development Forward: Accountability,  
Transparency, Equitable Trade Policies” – September 6, 2006  
Moderator’s Summary – Katherine Marshall**

The discussion this afternoon approached the challenging topic of how to advance the development agenda from five very different perspectives, with panelists representing different continents, disciplines, institutions, sectors of activity, approaches and generations. Each brought rich insights and, in keeping with the conference mandate, explicit lessons and bold ideas about what should come next. Hans Blix brought rich experience of public and private sectors, operating at the highest levels of the global stage, and a lifelong vision of how classic security issues for armaments affect global prospects. Grace Nshemeire brought real life and real time insights from Africa and suggested the powerful potential of action by the lowest income entrepreneurs and consumers if private sector actors respond with wisdom. Nuhu Ribadu brought to bear from his lived Nigerian experience graphic witness to both real dangers and the pathologies of corrupt practices and an urgent call to action. Lester Salamon traced the extraordinary paradigm shifts of ideas taking place about civil society and the unprecedented potential for the dizzying galaxy of institutions to take on new roles and formations. And Christopher Sinckler put the agendas for global trade reform under a powerful lens of social justice. Participants brought wide-ranging questions to the dialogue, reflecting a keen preoccupation above all with the challenges of arms and the evils of corruption but also weaving elements of the human security agenda in all its forms into its complex tapestry.

Ten themes and observations emerged from the dialogue.

1. The dangers of this historic moment, the magnitude of challenges, and the *gloomy prospects* when stock is taken, emerged starkly. The unraveling of the post World War II determination and instruments for arms control and disarmament, the dangers of new arms races pose real and present dangers. Weaknesses and failures of governance and law and order threaten individual and collective achievements from every side. The lack of clarity on world trade reform casts a large shadow on development progress. And underlying it all, a deep common concern so clear it scarcely needed mention is the continuing scandal of global poverty and the unacceptable and unnecessary suffering of billions of people.
2. The group also, however, brought, from each and every perspective, *a sense of the possible and of hope* – a conviction that progress is attainable and that “win-win” formulas can be found and applied. Each brought a sense of the possible and a strong call to “get on with it” – just “do it”. The resources, facts and know-how are all there. We need to use them.
3. The theme of *transparency* emerged time and time again with a call to knowledge and facts. The information age gives us powerful tools we have never had before, to know what is happening, to get at the facts. Knowledge truly is power, but a hard and careful look at it is more urgent than ever. With the potential for new knowledge comes new demands to use the knowledge, and use it creatively, wisely and well. Each speaker highlighted the imperative of looking for and at the facts and called on us all to use knowledge proactively, actively and well.

4. *Ethical language* and challenges were woven through each and every part of the discussion. Each speaker highlighted the challenges but also their own ethical perspectives. I noted constant refrains of a discourse around ethics, with words echoing again and again: integrity, truth, justice, trust, honesty, resolve, humility, fairness, responsibility, dignity, discretion, hearing excluded voices and amplifying them, care and concern for the other, equity.
5. Each speaker highlighted *pragmatic and practical approaches*: this was a group of idealistic pragmatists and pragmatic idealists, whose call was to use the institutions we have, rather than waiting for an ideal world that is unlikely to come. There were calls to “do it properly”, to take on responsibility for action, to build on real energies of people and communities that are waiting to be unleashed.
6. New *challenges for governance* came from each presentation, against the backdrop of that one speaker repeatedly referred to as a dizzying set of paradigm shifts. We are living very dynamic changes in the landscape of global institutions. Clear thinking and a capacity to step back and see what is happening, is critical for success.
7. Each speaker highlighted *the demands for and reality of new alliances* taking shape and the potential they offer for creative new directions. The old cylinders of public, private, “mind, heart, soul and hands” can no longer be the reigning approach. A new kaleidoscope of alliances and partnerships involving unlikely combinations is vitally needed.
8. Not surprisingly, since this conference focuses on the NGO world, there were many calls to the potential *of civil society as it emerges today* – its energy, potential for creative, locally adapted action and advocacy, its large scope, dynamic growth, and engagement of people. The explosive growth of civil society roles and institutional forms is a revolution of our times and shapes every global issue the panel touched.
9. But the panel also put forward *complex and numerous challenges to civil society*. The calls included a much greater awareness and knowledge, termed “consciousness”. Too often civil society organizations see only part of the challenge and do not quest for facts and knowledge. A heightened conscience is urgently needed, awareness of the ethical challenges and differing perspectives. And competence is needed today more than ever: we have the potential to do better and need to work for excellence.
10. The group expressed a *heartening faith in the potential of the United Nations*, even with its keen awareness of its weaknesses and the challenges it faces. The pragmatic idealists here stressed that the UN system is more important than it ever has been and affirmed their faith in what it can achieve, with will and common purpose.