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Recipient, International Award- 2006

It is difficult to speak at a moment like this. For any person who believes in human dignity, in human rights, in peace, in non-violence... the name of Mahatma Gandhi shines like the sun... it extinguishes from view all the stars of the firmament. Indeed, it has been rightly said that it is difficult to imagine that such a person walked the earth...

For me to receive an award in the name of Gandhi's closest supporter and for having been judged to have lived and worked by his precepts, is an honor that surpasses all others. To join the ranks of the distinguished awardees of the Bajaj Prize for work outside India... people of the stature of Bishop Desmond Tutu and the late Sir Joseph Rotblatt, is indeed humbling. I hope to prove worthy of this great honor that you bestow on me this day.

Today 100 years after he launched non-violence and over half a century since his death, Gandhi's words, his actions and his example still chart the path we must all follow

In my long international career at the World Bank, the last seven years as Vice-President, I was guided by the precepts of Gandhi to speak truth to power and to give voice to the silent masses of the poor. I tried to be guided by his instruction: "Recall the face of the poorest and weakest man whom you have seen, and ask yourself, if the steps you contemplate are going to be of any use to him. Will it restore to him control over his own life and destiny?"

Today, many who guide our globalizing economy should be reminded of these words. Today, incredible wealth is accompanied by a remarkable lack of caring for the weak and the marginalized... But a world divided cannot survive. The human family cannot live partly rich and mostly poor.

We must change the world. We must harness the emerging universal values of our common humanity, and see beyond individual wealth and growth of GNP... and remember, as Robert Kennedy said, that: "The Gross National Product does not allow for the health of our children, the quality of their education, or the joy of their play. It does not include the beauty of our poetry or the strength of our marriages; the intelligence of our public debate or the integrity of our public officials. It measures neither our wit nor our courage; neither our wisdom nor our learning; neither our compassion nor our devotion to our country; it measures everything, in short, except that which makes life worthwhile."

And in the pursuit of that which makes life worthwhile, I say: We must not forget the weak and the vulnerable in this increasingly competitive world. The ruthless allocative efficiency of the markets should be tempered by a caring and nurturing society.

In the last five years, I have returned to Egypt to work with the coming generation. I have taken on the task to rebuild the ancient library of Alexandria with its research institutes and its art galleries in terms suited for the third millennium and the new revolutionary technologies.

Gandhi said: "A nation's culture resides in the hearts and in the soul of its people".

And it is in the hearts and minds of the young that we must wage the battle for peace and progress, for human dignity and non-violence. I am encouraged to work with the young, for In the nobility of their spirit,

In the exuberance of their youth,
In the quality of the education they have received,
In the unsullied idealism that they possess,

In the dedication to our common humanity that they bring... ..I find the hope of creating a better world. A world where according to the precepts of Gandhi, there would be

No Politics without principle No Wealth without work

No Commerce without morality

No Pleasure without conscience

No Education without character No Science without humanity

No Religion without sacrifice

A vision of a caring society

A vision where a people's greatness is measured by the quality of the lives of their poorest citizens not by the size of their armies or the scale of their buildings...

A vision where the future is for all, as open-ended as knowledge, as random as play, as surprising as human imagination and ingenuity...

Yes! We must change the world... We must ensure that the new millennium is indeed the millennium for all the wretched of the earth.

Inspired by the example of Gandhi, reinforced in our commitment by this award, my colleagues and I shall strive to... "Be the change that we want to see in the world". We shall, in all our actions, think of the unborn, remember the forgotten, give hope to forlorn, include the excluded, reach out to the unreached, and by our actions from this day onwards lay the foundation for better tomorrows. --00--

