

**“THE ROAD TO JOHANNESBURG:  
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, GLOBAL GOVERNANCE AND THE ROLE OF EUROPE  
IN THE WORLD”**

Speech as Chairman of Counterpart Europe, presenting a discussion note to the final session of the European RIO+10 Coalition 2nd Annual Progress Conference, Brussels

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“What is the purpose of a conference such as this? What is the path from this late spring here in Europe to the summit in a South African spring? In theory, these consultations are like a great river system. Tributaries merging and sweeping majestically to a conclusion in Johannesburg. Some river systems however, never make it. They end up in swamps and frustration, with the sodden prose of another compromised communiqué.

For the last eighteen months I have had the luxury of academic reflection on global governance and a chance to reflect on the process that leads to such summits. I want to assert the primacy of ideas that lead to actions in the success of such summits. Stockholm '72 alerted us to the challenges. Rio '92 showed us that we could achieve change. UNGASS '97 showed us what failure looks like. Jo'burg '02 could go either way. Churchill once famously offended a restaurateur by asserting 'this pudding has no theme'. Summits need themes. Unless we recognise what has changed since Rio, we are doomed to an expensive and frustrating failure.

There is nothing new about new, but occasionally there is a genuine moment of 'kairos', a 'jump time' when mankind's perception of itself changes. You can see this in Europe in the Renaissance, the Enlightenment and in the International Institution Building of the late 1940s. I believe that the next eighteen months is one of these moments - if we will it. A moment of integration - intellectually and institutionally. We are awkwardly poised in transition - from an industrial to a knowledge society, passing beyond patriarchy. Our nation states, all 189 of them, are no longer capable of solo solutions. They are powerful only to frustrate each other. Our electorates are better educated, less deferential and more suspicious of governance at all levels. Electorates expect their institutions to be accountable, transparent and legitimate. If they are not, they withdraw their support and with it the effectiveness of the institution. Our Enlightenment models of how we view religion, science and government itself are exhausted.

The images that we have of the 21st century are the fire work displays that celebrated our oneness as Millenium morn and the Seattle rioters that gave pictures to our unease. We have created an economic globalisation without any accompanying political globalisation. We risk sidelining what democracy we have achieved as a species. Johannesburg faces us with a choice. Do we create a framework for our common destiny or do we leave it to guess work? Are we capable of a communal act of institutional creativity or do we default to the law of the jungle?

Let us start from what needs to be done. Konrad von Moltke makes a key distinction between 'organisations' and 'institutions'. The forces of inertia lead us to argue endlessly about how to rearrange existing organisations, rather than to examine our institutions in the round, in all their political and personal complexity. The site of UNEP or the role of CSD are organisational questions. The nature and control of power on the planet is an institutional question.

Let us examine what has changed at a fundamental level

There is no hegemon to dictate a single answer. America has missed its opportunity. There is no 'north' any more. There are shifting coalitions amongst the variously wealthy. There is no 'south' any more in the old post-colonial sense of the word. There are shifting coalitions between regions and interest groups. There are tensions between town and country, rich and poor inside each society. There are no sectoral answers. We can no longer separate trade from environment, development from debt,

population from security. There is no longer a benefit of the doubt for politicians. With few exceptions, the heroes of independence are dead, departed or decaying.

We all know these truths from our own experience. In my case I draw on the collective memory of my organization. Counterpart started in the newly independent micro-states of the Pacific 35 years ago. In such tiny societies, there is no way to ignore the connectedness of everything. Environmental sustainability, employment, capacity building for civil society, the empowerment of women, micro-credit and good governance are one issue not half a dozen.

These are lessons to be learnt by larger societies. In Sri Lanka, Counterpart and Ranil Senanayake have pioneered analogue forestry. They work with local communities, to restore the forest cover, generate employment with organic and sustainable agriculture that can be exported under a certified fair trade label. Our latest project links this to an 'elephant corridor' that buys the standing carbon in return for a promise of 'elephant friendly farming'. The northern public buying these emissions certificates, simultaneously regenerates forest, helps preserve bio-diversity, inhibits climate change and funds an information corridor linking 27 village schools. The schools teach english using the forest as their subject matter.

We need to match this miracle of integration as we consider the role of the Rio+10 Coalition on the road to Johannesburg.

How do we integrate globalisation, global governance and sustainable development? What must Europe do in her own home? What is her contribution to the wider debate?

If dialogue means anything, we would want to understand the other regions. What needs to be done in the Latin American home? What does Asia think of global governance? How does Africa conceive the ground rules for a genuinely global deal, hammered out in partnership not by dictate?

We are not treading a simple path. The problems which we face as a species are complex and the answers will also be complex.

Indeed the challenge for civil society is complex. Business, ngos, the churches and the rest are not governing institutions. They will burn their fingers if they seek to supplant the role of politicians and parliamentarians, of judges and regulators. Their claims to influence, whether based on profits, passion or philosophy are not absolute. They do however bring experience of their own reality to the table of global governance. They must walk a fine line. We all know the negative path that starts with contact that becomes co-option, the collaboration that becomes collusion and, in extremis, the conspiracy of celebrity and mutual hubris.

The governing institutions of our planet are inadequate. They know this inadequacy, but they are mired in the language and conventions of an outdated paradigm. We owe them the best of our ideas. We must give voice to the truths that they dare not utter. We must make it politically correct to tell the truth about the abuse of power wherever it occurs. We regard the structure of the RIO+10 Coalition as a unique opportunity. If we take that opportunity we will perhaps be forgiven for the environmental footprint we have created by gathering here today.”

