

**TRANSCRIPT:
KEYNOTE SPEECH BY PRESIDENT BILL CLINTON
AT THE OFFICIAL LAUNCH AND 1ST ANNUAL MEETING OF CGDC
05-21-2011**

First of all, I want to thank my long time friend President Stoyanov for organising the Center for Global Dialogue and Cooperation and congratulate all of you for being part of the launch. I would also like to acknowledge the presence of the co-President of Bosnia, President Izetbegović, I had the honor to host him and his colleague, President Krajišnik in New York recently as we did a 15 year retrospective on the Dayton Peace Accords, what has happened since then and what is working and what isn't.

I would like to thank Ambassador Eacho for being here and especially, my long-time friend, General Wes Clark, who was the military leader of our diplomatic mission when we did the Dayton Peace Accords and the leader of NATO when we ended the ethnic cleansing in Kosovo. And I want to say how delighted I am that we have people from all over the Balkans here, from Albania, from Serbia. When I was President, I, as all the Bulgarians know, I went there as well as to Romania where I spent an enormous amount of time working on this whole region and working in cooperation with President Yeltsin then, and for a brief period, President Putin on this. I am glad you are here and I am glad that you are in support of the ideas behind the Center for Global Dialogue and Cooperation.

I also want to recognize one other person, who had a lot to do with putting this meeting together, my former Chief of Staff, when I left the White House, Karen Tramontano, who was run something called, the Global Fairness Initiative - a very important NGO that I have supported from its beginning. I am proud of her and I am glad, President Stoyanov, that you have involved her in your efforts.

I would like to put this conference, before we go into the question and answers, into the larger framework of what I believe is going on in the 21st century world. What I believe explains what is happening in the Middle East and North Africa today, the struggles that are going on all over the world, of poor people to make a living, the attempts to stop from destroying the planet from global warming without having to give up the right of mining natural resources and developing wealth often for people who have never had it before.

This is a very interesting world we are living in. There is more freedom and movement, more opportunities for entrepreneurs, more people are creating wealth and doing interesting things than ever before.

There are a phenomenal number of new scientific discoveries, every few months. Some of them are funny, for example, I spent an enormous amount of the American tax-payers money on the human genome project, trying to unravel the mysteries genome, so that we know the footprint of life in every person. And the most interesting early discovery, shortly after the genome was sequenced in 2000, is that all people are somewhere between 99.5

and 99.9 % identical in their genetic make-up. Think about it. If you look around the room here, every difference you can see, including gender, every single difference not related to age, is the product of somewhere between one tenth and one half of one percent of your make-up. Why are we here worried about the politics and problems in the Balkans and in the Middle East or any place else, because we spend 99.5 % of our time worrying about the 0.5 % of us that is different! So, remember that. We will come back to that. But it is true and it is not just about politics, is it?

I wish I were thinner, taller, I wish I were younger! It is a very important thing to remember. But then a few months ago, we learned that unless we are not just African but 100 % descendant back to the beginning of time for 150,000 years, one 100 percent descended from sub-Saharan Africans. Between 1 and 4 % of our genome is inherited from our pre-human ancestors the Neanderthals, who were big and burly and slow.

We survived and they did not, even though they were stronger than we were and they had very big brains, it was almost certainly because we could run away from large mammals and they couldn't. Now, in the United States, if you call someone a Neanderthal, if you think they are backward and kind of bullish. So, my wife and daughter were not surprised to learn that I am part Neanderthal! They were however stunned to learn that they were part Neanderthal! [Audience laughs]

We are laughing, but this has enormous practical significance, it may help us to unravel the genomic variations that put us at high risk of Parkinson's, or Alzheimer's or different kinds of cancers. It is an interesting time to be alive. And wherever you live, if you have access to electricity, any 10 year old can get on the computer and find out in 30 seconds information which I had to go to university learn...This is exciting. Look at the internet communications between the people who were doing the upheavals in Egypt and Tunisia, the young people. And we now know, that they know how to do this, partly going to a centre in Qatar and studying but also because for 2 years they were in contact not just with each other but with young people in Belgrade who wanted to help depose President Milosevic and have the kind of government which they now have in Serbia - where I am very proud to say, my wife is going in a few days. It has started a new chapter in our relationship there.

So, it is a neat time to be alive. But there are some significant problems in this modern world we live in. We are completely interdependent in the sense that we can't get away from each other. But our interdependence is plagued first by too much inequality and too much instability and by the fact that the way in which we produce and consume energy is not sustainable because of climate change. All these things threaten the progress that we are hoping to make. Half the world's people still live on less than 2 dollars a day; billion people on less than a dollar a day. A billion people go to bed hungry every night. Well over 100 million children never go to school, another 100 million go to school but they have no trained teachers and no learning materials.

One 1/4 of all the deaths on earth, this year, will be from AIDS, Tuberculosis, Malaria and infections related to dirty water. 80 % of the people who will die from dirty water diseases will be children under 5. All of these are the deaths of the poor.

We have people in America who have AIDS and catch Malaria when they are travelling. Whilst they have been once exposed to Tuberculosis almost nobody dies from it. It is an instable world. Some instability is good. Those of you who have made enough money to contribute to this event and do other things which you like and to create jobs for other people, you did it because you lived in an environment of creative instability, where if you worked hard, or had a good idea or you knew how to organise better you could generate wealth and opportunity for other people. Some amount of instability is necessary for a society to stay alive and to grow. Just as some amount of inequality is necessary. But if you have too much, things come off at the seams.

So, look at this financial crisis, it starts in America, immediately it is in the United Kingdom, after that in Ireland, after that in Iceland and then it threatens to slow down the world dramatically. Look how we worry about disease travelling, because we do. The epidemic of Sars began in the mainland of China, quickly it goes to Hong Kong and before you know it, we have got a quarantine in Canada. There are lots of examples of this travelling instability. Of course terrorism where we worry that non-state actors can reach beyond their neighborhoods and kill people and certainly it has been done.

I was thinking, after all the publicity over the demise of Osama Bin Laden, of all people who were killed who did not get a mentioned by Al Qaeda. The nameless African Muslims who died in Kenya and Tanzania just so Al Qaeda could blow up our embassies. Innocent Africans, devout Muslims walking along the street, wiped away as if their lives counted for nothing. The hyper-non violent Indonesian Hindus, on the island of Bali, killed because they welcomed tourists from other lands.

So, there is a lot of instability in the world. And, finally, the way we produce and consume energy is warming the planet dramatically. My wife just became the First Secretary of State ever to attend of a group which I helped to organize, in 1996 called the Arctic Council. Essentially, it is all of the Scandinavian countries of Europe, plus Canada and the United States and Russia and they talk about things which are very important. There are 13,000 square miles in the Arctic Circle, if there is a natural disaster or a ship wreck, which country will take the lead in saving lives? But the rest of the discussion is fascinating because it shows you the challenge of the modern world. Half the people there were ecstatic that the warming of the North Pole will enable us to more easily explore for oil and gas because it has 25 % of the world's undeveloped reserves and the other half were terrified that we have already burnt too much oil and gas and coal and the planet is going crazy as evidenced by the fact that you will soon be able to take a ship across the North Pole in the Summer time and already the plants are blooming, 15 days earlier in the Arctic Circle than they did just a few years ago.

All that seems fine, but the Arctic Council met in Greenland, in the tiny capital city of Nuuk which has only 30,000 people. Greenland is a massive island with only a few people, where 90 % plus is covered by the icecap that contains 8 % per cent of world's fresh water. If you live in the Persian Gulf why should you care about that? Because, if all that water melts and goes into the North Atlantic, it could block the Gulf Stream which could make Northern Europe,

Northern Canada and even the Northern most parts of inhabited Russia so cold in the Winter that it would completely shut the economies down for 4 months. Wrecking some of the most productive economies in the world and affecting markets all over the world.

Now, I say this not to be negative, because there has never been a time without problems, but to point out that if you live in a time everything we do, effects somebody else as well as ourselves. We are foolish if we do not acknowledge the common challenges we have. If you want your grandchildren to be able to sit in a chair like this with even greater prosperity, peace and opportunities than you have, we have got to do something about it – the global inequality, instability and unsustainability. We have to figure a way to do it in a way that is good economics. I will say more about that in a minute.

The second big challenge is this, if you live in a world where all the borders are more like nets than walls, where everything we do effects not just ourselves and our loved ones and our nearby enemies, but people well beyond our borders, you have to find a way to share the future; to share its opportunities, to share its problem-solving and other responsibilities, to share. You have to find a way to celebrate your individual racial and ethnic and religious and cultural differences and to believe that our common humanity matters more.

Bosnia has made a great deal of progress since Dayton 15 years ago. But it would have made 3 times as much progress if everybody involved wanted to share the future. I pray that the Bosnian Serbs will one day understand that they can get richer, give their kids a better future and completely preserve their distinctive identity and history more by sharing the future than by fighting over the past. So, how do you get people to share the future? First, they have to think about it. You cannot share the future if you are obsessed with the past, you have to liberate yourself.

When Nelson Mandela got out of jail after 27 years and he invited his jailers to his inauguration, that is mostly what people knew. He did something far more important than that. He put leaders of the political parties that put him in prison for 27 years in his own government. Why? Because, he knew he had to share the future or he would be condemned to the past, or his people will.

I was talking to President Izetbegović, when I was there last year to receive an honor in Pristina, and I met with the leaders of the Parliament as the they were about to have their local elections. And the majority of Kosovo-Albanian Muslims had just created on their own initiative 4 new urban centers, that were guaranteed to have minority Serbian orthodox mayors because they wanted them to be over-represented in their government. So they could share the future. They did not want people to feel that they had no place at the table. And I could give you example after example after example of that, the most successful places are places of sharing.

When I started doing all of this AIDS work around the world and we lowered price of medicine from 500 dollars a year to 90 dollars a year. Children's medicine from 600 dollars a year to 60 dollars a year – we did it by convincing all the people that make generic medicine to fight

AIDS that they should go from a low volume high profit margin business with uncertain payment to a high volume low profit margin business with certain payment.

I told them, this will never last if you lose money, so if I am wrong and you lose money, I give you my word I will renegotiate the deal. I will never treat you unfairly. I believe that if we share this medicine more broadly and if we can fund it, you will make more money. And I am happy to say, that they are all making dramatically more money, saving millions of more lives than they were before. That's what we have to do, we have to figure out how to share the future mentally.

I have just returned from a fascinating meeting, a world away from this in Manaus, Brazil, on the Northern edge of the Amazon Rainforest. Why should you care about that? Because 20 % of all the world's oxygen produced by non-ocean sources comes from the Amazon rain forest. That means that everyone who breathes anywhere on planet earth, should want the rain forest to be preserved.

Now, the Brazilians are having some trouble now because they are growing so fast. For 4 years, they have used more bio-fuels than gasoline in their cars. They produce the most efficient bio-fuel in the world from sugar cane. They get 9 gallons of bio-fuel for every gallon of oil. They use their oil, for other petroleum purposes. You know, oil in a thousand things. They asked me to come to talk about what they could do next because they run out of easy answers. 93% of their electricity is clean energy; it is solar and nuclear, 50 to 40 more or less. They want to build 3 new hydroelectric plants but they do not have any rivers strong enough to power them, except from the rainforest. So now you have 2 groups of environmentalists at odds and one of these most powerful rivers, if they build dam where is best to do, they have to basically displace and destroy the livelihood of a native Amazon Indian tribe that has been undisturbed for literally 1000s of years. They do not have any easy answers.

And here is the point I want to make, I went to this meeting, no one was screaming at anyone else, no one was angry at anyone else. The head of every oil company was there, the heads of the electric companies were there, the head of the people who want to preserve the life of the Indians were there, the people who grow the cane were there, the leader of the Green Party who was trying to change the whole economic direction of Brazil were there, all these people were there and they were talking about sharing the future. And I thought to myself, if we had that in America, we would not have the budget problem we have. If we had that in the Middle East, we would get an agreement, between Israel and the Palestinians. They were talking about sharing the future. So, I ask you to think about those 2 simple things. Petar is going to ask me a lot of questions. If you ask me my position on anything, I will immediately think, "If we take this course, will it reduce inequality, or instability and or unsustainability?" If it will, I will support it. If it will not, I don't.

If you ask me, how do you feel about this or that conflict, I ask myself, a simple question, "If we take this force, will people be more likely to share the future or to divide it because they are obsessed with the past?"

Every person here has as a legitimate grievance against someone. Everybody – right? So, I will tell you one last story.

I asked Nelson Mandela once, to walk me through the last minutes of his time in captivity, I don't know if you remember on that Sunday morning in 1991, when he was released from prison for the first time in 27 years and he walked down the dusty road to a gate that was closed and he got into the car and they opened the gate and he drove out. It was shown on the television all over the world.

By the time I asked this question, we had become very good friends, so I said, "You know Madiba, I know that you are a great man and all that but you are also a very smart politician. You played all this love business of putting opponents into your cabinet and inviting your jailers to the inauguration, I just want to now ask you one thing, "When you were working down dirt road for the last time after 27 years, didn't you hate them again?" He has reached the age and paid the price to be able to afford the truth.

So, he looked at me and laughed and said, "Well, of course I did!" He said, "I felt hatred and anger because I was robbed for 27 years. I did not see my children grow-up. It destroyed my marriage. I was a healthy man, a great boxer and everything else. I could barely move when I got out". But he said, "Just before I got in the car, I got hold of myself and I said, 'They have had me for 27 years if you hate them when you get through this gate, they will still have you, they will own you' ", he said, "I wanted to be free and so I let it go". And so must we all. Thank you very much.