

Annual Security Review Conference

ENGLISH only

Keynote speech by Dr. José Ramos-Horta

Opening Session

Vienna, 28 June 2018

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I have been in Austria on a number of occasions and I departed each time with more fond memories. I thank you, Mr. Secretary-General, Ambassador Lamberto Zannier, and Dr. Gernot Erler, Representative of the German Chairmanship-in-Office, for the kind invitation extended to me to take part in this important gathering of 57 Member States, covering a vast expanse of the world, from Vancouver to Vladivostok. My sincere appreciation also goes to the Austrian Ministry of Foreign affairs and OSCE staff for all the facilities provided.

You are convening here at a time when Europe and much of the world are confronted with a multitude of ever more complex and interconnected social, political, economic and security challenges that threaten to unravel even a multinational institution as solid as the European Union and some of its constituting States.

Many are still trying to make sense of the result of the UK referendum on EU membership. Rather than uniting and strengthening European unity and cooperation in the face of the ever more complex challenges faced by all, there are centrifugal forces tearing Europe apart. Those in England, the so-called Eurosceptics who sowed the seeds of British exit from the EU have paved the way for a much diminished UK, in size and influence in Europe and the world.

Will the Queen be able to prevent the splintering of the Kingdom? It seems inevitable that Scotland will now go it's own way and Northern Ireland will reunite with the Republic.

The cauldron of the Middle East wars and the endemic poverty plaguing much of the African Continent have uprooted more than 60 million people and of these many have sought and are seeking shelter and a new life in the old Continent.

Some European leaders and people have shown great heart in welcoming their fellow human beings fleeing wars and deprivation but understandably other European leaders and communities have been less generous, reacting often out of ignorance and fear. And let me clarify that when I use the word "understandably" I am not condoning the xenophobic mindset of many in Europe; I am simply saying that in any given society different people act or react differently in similar circumstances.

The US, Canada, the Latin American States, Australia and New Zealand are very much a product of the religious wars and extreme poverty in Europe that prompted the greatest movement of people ever in previous centuries. We are living witnesses to an ongoing and irreversible demographic transformation of Europe; a continuation or repetition of the massive movement of people in previous centuries caused by wars and poverty in Europe prompting millions of Europeans to flee to the Americas.

No matter how high and thick your walls are, there will be no fortress Europe that can stem the tide of people fleeing wars and poverty. The demographic transformation of Europe from a predominately ageing Judaeo-Christian Continent to a vibrant and younger multiethnic, multi-religious and multi-culture Europe is unstoppable. These phenomenon are not always entirely peaceful and sadly many will suffer immensely but with wisdom, determination and compassion Europe would emerge rejuvenated and stronger in the long run.

Some decades ago the principle of inviolability of colonial boundaries inherited by the newly independent African States carved out by XIX Century European powers was strictly upheld by all.

The first to challenge this taboo was the Eritrean People's Liberation Front waging a successful protracted war resulting in the secession of Eritrea from Ethiopia. The second successful secession case was Christian South Sudan seceded from the Northern Arab majority of Sudan. In both cases, secession didn't result in peace, greater freedom and prosperity. The euphoria didn't last long as the newly independent South Sudan imploded with extraordinary ferocity and untold destruction. Eritrea is a tragic story of a dream turned nightmare.

These phenomena that were thought of as a malaise of the developing world seem to have contaminated the well-established European Nation-States.

But in reality the fragmentation of XX Century European Nation-States was unleashed more than 20 years ago when the shaky ground upon which the mighty Soviet Union was erected collapsed. Americans and Western Europeans celebrated the dismantling of the Berlin Wall, the demise of the USSR, the end of post-WW2 Yugoslavia, and did not think twice in moving EU and NATO boundaries eastwards ever closer to the gates of the weakened and hungry Russian bear. But again the euphoria lasted only as long as it lasted.

The above snippets of past, recent and on-going phenomenon should help us reach some conclusions; empires, regimes, governments, elected and non-elected come and go. From the glittering Roman empires to the rise and fall of the Third Reich, the rise and fall of the Soviet Union, American triumphalism and the rise of China and India, all are passing phenomenon, and only the people are a permanent feature, born and survive in the midst of wars, starving and dying of poverty in the minds of opulence of some, but the people will always be there.

The lesson is that whenever we think of and design institutions and projects we must always endeavour to serve the people, the institutions and projects must be peoples-based, connected

with the people; and the institutions may adapt as peoples needs, desires and priorities evolve, change.

The other lesson is no power is eternal, empires and emperors come and go, the strong and ruler of today may be the weak and servant of tomorrow. So we must always embrace the virtue of humility and compassion, sources of greater and longer lasting power.

When we are at the peak of power and privileges, our power is enhanced when we embrace the virtues of humility and compassion, embracing those on the fringes of power and opportunities. If you have triumphed in battle do not seek to humiliate the vanquished ones; walk towards them, your sword pointing down, invite them to rise up, embrace and invite them to join in celebrating peace and freedom for all.

TIMOR-Leste is a country of only a little more than 1 million. We survived and prevailed through centuries of colonial rule, occupation by the Japanese Imperial Army, recolonisation by Portugal, and occupation by Indonesia.

In victory in 2002 we celebrated our freedom and honoured our former adversaries; we forgave our captors and tormentors without demanding or waiting for an apology; we rejected an international tribunal to try those who committed war crimes and crimes against humanity. Those who tortured and killed did not apologise for their crimes and they continue in denial, unable to summon enough courage and accept their part of guilt. But this is their problem, they live with their crimes in their conscience, the screams and faces of their victims still haunting them, everyday, every night. We are now free and refuse to be hostage of anger and hatred.

Ladies and gentlemen, my European brothers and sisters: look Eastward and seek to engage Russia; instead of moving planes, tanks and troops closer to the Russian border, you might seek to understand the reasons of Russian pride, fears and actions. Sound bites about Putin being the new "Russian Tzar" and Russian "expansionism" are not going to help bring back Europe and Russia to normal levels of cooperation and the recovery of Crimea.

This now impoverished region of the world, I mean Europe, of great nations who did great things for humanity, but who also invented the Inquisition, colonialism, slavery and two World Wars, must reinvent itself as a region of solidarity and compassion, to reconnect with its people, reach out to the great Russia.

I am not a romantic pacifist who believes that force must never be used. Sometimes, the use of force is necessary, when it is the only option available to prevent genocide. Bosnia, Rwanda, the Killing Fields of Cambodia are just some reminders that non-use of force to prevent genocide and mass atrocities is equivalent to surrender of our morality, a betrayal of the victims. However, the preferred option should always be prevention of conflicts, dialogue and mediation to settle disputes and when these are actively, creatively and patiently exercised in a timely fashion more often than not they produces better results.

National actors, rather than external, are best placed to engage in conflict prevention processes at every level, from community to national level. External actors are not the best substitute and should not be the first responders; however, in some situations, credible threat of sanctions, including use of force, may help domestic actors leading prevention and mediation actions in their efforts in preventing conflicts from erupting.

I had the unique privilege of chairing the High Level Independent Panel on UN Peace Operations appointed by the Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon (2014-2015) and I am Co-Chair of the Independent Commission on Multilateralism, a project of the International Peace Institute, both endeavouring to deliver a better, more effective and credible multilateral system anchored on the UN.

My colleagues and I, a 16 Panel Member, produced a comprehensive report with more than 100 recommendations, on how to improve overall UN's role in conflict prevention and mediation, more agile and effective deployment of peace-enforcers and on sustaining peace. We also made far-reaching recommendations on improving leadership and coordination at the UN Secretariat.

We expect that the next UN Secretary-General, to be elected this Fall, will make it an absolute priority the full implementation of the HIPPO Report and of the two other complementary reports, namely on Peace Building Architecture and on Women, Peace and Security. Procrastination and failure in undertaking speedy and full implementation of the three seminal and complementary reports and recommendations will inevitably result in the UN sliding further into irrelevance.

There is universal agreement that prevention should have primacy over intervention. However, while prevention might appear simple, nothing is ever simple when we are confronted with human frailties like inflated ego of leaders, ignorance, prejudices and fear.

Take the tragic example of Syria. I sum up in few words three main obstacles: overestimating one own's power; underestimating the adversary's; miscalculating.

In my view all have erred: the Assad regime erred for not making real efforts in reaching out to those wanting more freedom; the opposition erred in overestimating their own power, refused to negotiate with the regime, demanding instead its resignation; and underestimating the staying power of the Assad regime and failing to understand the fears of the Allawite minority in power that inspire its actions; Europeans and Americans who underestimated the Assad regime, misread the complexities of the so-called "Arab Spring", and euphoric with their pyrrhic air campaign against Muhamar Ghadafi of Libya, believed they could arrange another regime change. All miscalculated and we all know the consequences of this miscalculation; the consequences of this is what you see, right in your midst in Europe, the hundreds of thousands of Syrians pleading with you to shelter them.

Europe and Russia cannot continue to drift apart. This vast region with endless resources and highly motivated and educated people, working in honest and innovative partnership for peace

and progress, can transform the world; there are more in common between Europe and Russia than what divide you.

The US should also rethink its relationship with Russia and China, treating them as equals and not as second class powers. Whether the US like it or not, China is inexorably emerging as a modern XXIst Asian power. This inevitably leads to fears among China's neighbours and this being the case, it is China, an aspiring world power, that must behave as a responsible and benevolent power, and reassure its neighbours.

For many in China and Russia and indeed in many other countries, US policies are always inspired by its strategic hegemonic goals and selfish economic interests. This is an exaggeration although it is understandable as they view the US through the prism of many past US policies. I have a more innocent and benevolent view of the US. I am a great fan of the Kennedys, of the immense good they did in their time; their legacy has lasted for generations long after they have gone; American society has produced thousands of great achievers, scientists and millionaires whose roots can be traced back to impoverished towns, ghettos and villages around the world; another great American President will soon leave active office.

In regards the above, it is easier said than done. How can Europe or the US normalise relations with Russia in the face of the annexation of Crimea?

My best advice is, set aside what are, for the time being, irreconcilable differences, reengage each other, explore areas and ideas of common interest, namely on how best to address the global economic and financial crisis, bring an end to the Syria conflict, address the refugee crisis in a wholistic manner, both in its humanitarian dimension and political and economic dimensions; address extremism and terrorism in a wholistic manner, both through sharp intelligence and prudent action and through understanding and resolving the root causes.

Wars are not inevitable. And every war brings immense destruction and suffering, exacerbating tensions, rivalries and generate more enemies; almost every military victory is a Pyrrhic victory.

So we must do more to enhance, multiply preventive diplomacy mechanisms and initiatives, undertake research on innovative prevention processes and mediation. There are no short cuts to peace; we build peace in our homes, families, villages, towns, block by block. Peace is the work of patient and dedicated people with missionary zeal, people who have empathy for those who suffer the most, women, children, elderly. Peace-makers must have a heart and compassion.

Europe is at crossroads. The challenges are daunting. But Europeans faced greater challenges in the past. You regrouped, reconciled and rebuilt a greater Europe after WWII. You can do it again, and do better still.

You are all in my daily prayers to the Almighty to inspire you to do greater missions for Europe and the world.